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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO IN CONTEXT

BY

ANTONIO DAVID TRAFICANTE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING 1991

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Alas, there are so many things between heaven and earth of which only the poets have let themselves dream!

Nietzsche, "Of Poets;"
Thus Spoke Zarathustra

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SUBMITTED BY ANTONIO DAVID TRAFICANTE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

The thesis will examine the proposal of E.M.W. Tillyard in his comparison of Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** with his early **Prolusion** 1. The discussion will attempt to resolve the debate by pointing towards a more historical approach to the poems. Part three of the thesis will explore the subject of Melancholy as used by Milton in order to define the differing moods exemplified by these poems. From this study of Melancholy (**Melancholia Artificialis** - Artist's Melancholy), the thesis will show how "the contemplative ideal of the sciences leads both to the mastery of nature and the vision of God" (Merritt. Y. Hughes). The thesis then proceeds to explain Milton's Companion Poems in relation to the intellectual and theological climate of the day - man's relationship to Nature and God, and the Renaissance concept of time. The discussion concludes with the suggestion that the two poems anticipate many of the central points of concern found in Milton's later masterpieces and should thus be given a more important place in the canon.

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I wish to thank two persons without whom this thesis might have proven less of a pleasure to write. The first, Dr. James Forrest, with whom I studied Milton for two years and think to have benefited much from his wisdom. Not only has he provided me with valuable insight into Milton's genius, but has also helped me to understand the poet behind the poetry. As well, I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Jonathan Hart, who, in his capacity as reader made numerous suggestions which have allowed me to present a more thoughtful paper than would have otherwise been the case. I am grateful to them both.

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I. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso and the Critics

In the case of great artists, critics are often not content to acknowledge particular merits in an author's work but become almost as fascinated with the possible circumstances of its creation. In recent years Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** have attracted a great deal of attention from those scholars determined to ascribe to the poems various traditions - the pastoral and georgic; the classical philosophic; the poems' connection with Renaissance encomia, and their relationship with the classical ode or hymn.[1] However, the one tradition that has clearly enjoyed the most influence over the rest is the one advanced by E.M.W. Tillyard's in **The Miltonic Setting**, which argued that the "Companion Pieces" owe their existence to Milton's own Academic Exercises or Prolusions.[2] In his efforts to prove his theory, Tillyard also sets out to show that, contrary to the long-held belief that the poems were written while Milton lived at Horton, that they were more likely written in the summer of 1631, that is to say, at least a year before his "retirement" at Horton and while he was still at Cambridge. Tillyard was to enjoy considerably more success in persuading scholars regarding the dating of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** than he was in convincing them with his idea that the poems likely owed their existence to some nebulous academic requirements Milton undertook in order to complete his M.A. degree at Cambridge.[3]

Tillyard's decision linking the "Companion Poems" to the

First Prolusion is mainly based upon the literal analogies which he is convinced exist between the two works. In the **First Prolusion**, entitled "Whether Day or Night is the More Excellent," Milton pleads at some length in behalf of the former. When he later came to write **L'Allegro**, Tillyard believes Milton simply transcribed the contents of the prolusion into poetry. From this assumption he then goes to conclude that "from first to last the poems are constructed on the contrasted eulogy of day and night" (21). It is to the evidence he offers in defence of this statement which now deserves further attention.

Using what may be described as a direct and systematic approach, Tillyard begins to defend his proposal by insisting that from the outset the Companion Pieces exhibit inescapable similarities to the **First Prolusion**. **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, like the prolusion in question, opens with mythical genealogies though not quite as elaborate. This evidence by itself Tillyard maintains is not conclusive, but what follows their opening lines strongly suggests that the poems are an "undoubted imitation" of the Academic Exercise. Further proof of this assertion is to be found when **L'Allegro** goes on to describe daybreak in terms so similar to the prolusion as to identify the prose work as the source of the poem. The account from the prolusion, which Tillyard cites, must be given in its entirety if his argument is to be appreciated properly:

> Even the birds cannot hide their delight, but leave their nests at peep of dawn and noise it abroad

> from the tree-tops in sweetest song, or darting upwards as near as they may to the sun, take their flight to welcome the returning day. First of all these the wakeful cock acclaims the sun's coming, and like a herald bids mankind shake off the bonds of sleep, and rise and run with joy to greet the new-born day. The kids skip in the meadows, and beasts of every kind leap and gambol in delight. The sad heliotrope, who all night long has gazed toward the east, awaiting her beloved Sun, now smiles and beams at her lover's approach. The marigold too and rose, to add their share to the joy of all, open their petals and shed abroad their perfume, which they have kept for the Sun alone, and would not give to Night, shutting themselves up within their little leaves at fall of evening. And all the other flowers raise their heads, drooping and weighed down with dew, and offer themselves to the Sun, mutely begging him to kiss away the tear-drops which his absence brought. The Earth too decks herself in lovelier robes to honour the Sun's coming, and the clouds, arrayed in garb of every hue, attend the rising god in festive train and long procession.[4]

Tillyard believes a number of parallels may be drawn between the above passage and L'Allegro: first, the lark which in the poem sings "From his watch-tow'r in the skies,"(43)[5] matches the birds in the prolusion which "dart upwards as near as they may to the Sun." In addition, he finds it significant that in both works the cock is mentioned immediately following the birds. In the poem l'allegro[6] comes to the window to bid good morning to Aurora, while in the passage from the prolusion mankind en masse is bidden to "shake off the bonds of sleep, and rise and run with joy to greet the new-born day." But for Tillyard, the most striking of all resemblances occurs when one compares the final sentence from the prose with these lines from **L'Allegro**:

> Where the great Sun begins his state,
> Rob'd in flames, and Amber light,
> The clouds in thousand Liveries dight;
> (60-62)

Nor is he finished here. Rather, Tillyard fancies that the opening ten lines of **L'Allegro,** which he calls puzzling and even burlesque, draw life from passages in the **First Prolusion**, and quotes the following two as good examples:

> Day is the eldest daughter of Heaven, or rather of his son, begotten by him, it is said, to be the comfort of the race of men and the terror of the infernal gods, for fear lest Night should rule unopposed, lest Ghosts and Furies and all that loathsome brood of monsters, unchecked by any barrier between Earth and Hades, should leave the pit of Hell and make their way even to the upper world, and lest wretched Man, enveloped and surrounded by murky darkness, should suffer even in this life the tortures of the damned (**Works**; pp.

226-7).

> None will you meet save ghosts and spectres, and fearsome goblins who follow in Night's train from the realms below; it is their boast that all night long they rule the earth and share it with mankind. To this end, I think, night sharpens our hearing, that our ears may catch the sooner and our hearts perceive with greater dread the groans of spectres, the screeching of owls and nightbirds, and the roaring of lions that prowl in search of prey (**Works**; p. 230).

Tillyard refers to these passages from **Prolusion 1** as burlesque (particularly the second entry), and having already established the opening of **L'Allegro** as burlesque, he concludes Milton must have had the prose work very much in mind when he began writing his poem. He also notes that the "Cimmerian darkness" which appears soon after the second of these passages, is also found in **L'Allegro**, something he thinks to be hardly coincidental.

Final proof that the Companion Pieces evolved out of the **First Prolusion** is, according to Tillyard, made abundantly clear from what Milton says early in his Exercise. While still making introductory remarks, Milton suggests that perhaps the subject would be better represented in verse than as an academic requirement:

> The question whether Day or Night is preferable is no common theme of discussion, and it is now my

> duty, the task meted out to me this morning, to probe the subject thoroughly and radically, though it might seem better suited to a poetical exercise than to a contest of rhetoric (**Works**, p. 221).

In Tillyard's estimation, when Milton had completed the **First Prolusion**, he was already considering its potential for the more congenial form of poetry. He is therefore convinced that **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** eventually became the "poetical exercise" on the theme of whether Day or Night is the more excellent.

The question of the role **Il Penseroso** plays in Tillyard's theory also arises: having shown at some length the intimate relationship existing between the **Prolusion** and **L'Allegro**, how does he explain the existence of the second of the Companion Pieces? According to Tillyard, the academic disputant in Milton's day at Cambridge, in addition to giving a speech on a prescribed topic, had also to prepare a counter argument.[7] Having spoken on the side of day over night, Tillyard suspects Milton to have also given some thought to what might have been said in night's behalf. This conclusion, then, seems to be the **raison d'etre** for the second of Milton's Companion Poems.

Building upon the premise that **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** "grew out" of the **First Prolusion**, Tillyard believes the social tone of the poems would indicate they were composed with a university audience in mind. He supposes that the opening of **L'Allegro's** "infamous coupling" of Melancholy being born of Cerberus and blackest midnight, was designed to have just the right effect for an audience who doubtless would have been familiar with the subject matter and quick to detect the burlesque. Much the same sort of thing, Tillyard claims, takes place in the **Sixth Prolusion**, throughout which Milton constantly alternates between the sublime and the ridiculous to the extent which Kathryn McEwan thinks its existence as unfortunate.[8] The social tone which, according to Tillyard, pervades both Prolusions and the Companion Pieces may be seen as further proof that **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** are more appropriately placed during Milton's days at Cambridge and not at Horton as previously supposed. Milton had suffered at the hands of his schoolmates who had given him the appellation "Lady of Christ's Coll:" and traces of this condition may be found in his **First Prolusion.** But by the time of his **Sixth Prolusion** all hostility towards him seemed to have ceased and Milton (no doubt uncharacteristically) responded to his change of fortune by a speech that must certainly present some embarrassment for any Milton purist. Another result of this newly-felt enthusiasm Tillyard believes was the composition of the Companion Poems, in appreciation for his new-found audience at Cambridge.

Tillyard concludes his argument that Milton wrote the Companion Pieces at Cambridge by advancing at least three further points. First, **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** are excluded from the Trinity Manuscript, thus favoring Cambridge over Horton as the probable place where they were written. Second, Tillyard believes that Milton's tribute upon the death of the Marchioness of Winchester in April 1631, written in octosyllabics, was a prelude to the Companion Pieces written in the same meter a few months later. Third, Tillyard finds evidence for his claim by pointing to a passage in the **Seventh Prolusion**, written in the spring or summer of 1632, where Milton remembers fondly a period of joyous wanderings in the countryside blessed with the company of the Muses:

> I can myself call to witness the woods and rivers and the beloved village elms, under whose shade I enjoyed in the summer just passed (if I may tell the secrets of goddesses) such sweet intercourse with the Muses, as I still remember with delight. There I too, amid rural scenes and woodland solitudes, felt that I had enjoyed a season of growth in a life of seclusion (**Works**; p. 289).

Tillyard contends that in the last prolusion, Milton seems to be speaking of the same country setting that he evoked so brilliantly in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**: for Tillyard, "they are the fruit of that happy season of growth." In short, he is certain that Milton composed the poems in the summer of 1631.

i. Tillyard and His Critics

Among the first scholars to respond to Tillyard's argument linking the Companion Pieces to the Prolusions is William R. Parker.[9] Parker is mainly concerned with assigning probable dates to some of Milton's earlier poems which have tended to defy dating. Parker agrees with Tillyard's dating of the poems, as well of the method used to arrive at them.

Like Tillyard, Parker finds the absence of the poems from the Trinity MS as sufficient evidence that Milton composed them while studying at Cambridge and not during his stay at Horton. Also, Parker finds the similarities of meter between **An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester** and **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** simply too suggestive to be ignored. He therefore concludes, as Tillyard had, that the Companion Poems followed shortly after Milton's tribute to the Marchioness of Winchester which appears to have been written about April, 1631. Parker also concurs with Tillyard on the biographical significance of the brief excerpt from the **Seventh Prolusion** where Milton is fondly recalling a previous jaunt in the countryside. Dating this prolusion early in 1632, Parker maintains that the happy moments recollected here must have taken place in the previous summer of 1631, later given immortality in the lines of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso.** Having agreed with Tillyard concerning the evidence for placing the Companion Poems in 1631, Parker seems to have no difficulty in accepting Tillyard's major premise that these poems derived from Milton's **First Prolusion** and were intended for a university audience. Several years later, when reviewing Tillyard's **Miltonic Setting**, Parker reiterated what he had already said concerning Tillyard's position with n significant alteration.[10]

In many ways critical reaction to Tillyard's supposition in stating the **First Prolusion** as the source for the Companion Pieces was begun in earnest with A.S.P. Woodhouse's essay "Notes on Milton's Early Development."[11] Woodhouse offers some interesting and penetrating insights regarding Milton's apprenticeship as poet with special reference to Tillyard's analysis of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso.** Woodhouse, like Parker before him, seems to find no objection with the dating of the two poems, but presents a strong challenge regarding the debt owed by the twin poems to the **First Prolusion**.

In regard to the time of composition, Woodhouse appears to echo Parker's conclusions, and thus Tillyard's. Woodhouse believes the absence of the poems from the Trinity Manuscript is suggestive, though he admits such evidence is inconclusive. Moreover, like Tillyard, he finds the Companion Pieces (particularly their opening) to have been written with an academic audience in mind. Woodhouse speaks eloquently of the conditions (discussed in the **Seventh Prolusion**) in which **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** were written as justifying perhaps Milton's final halcyon period, in which he is still able to banish "sleepless cares and complaints" and "walk with heart secure."[12]

However, as sympathetic as Woodhouse undoubtedly may be towards certain of Tillyard's claims, he is far from agreement when it comes to the suggestion that the origin of the

Companion Pieces are found in the **First Prolusion**. For Woodhouse, Tillyard's assertion that the poems "are constructed on the contrasted eulogy of day and night" is completely erroneous. **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, Woodhouse believes, are not poems in praise of day and night respectively, but rather they are works which illustrate the opposite sides of a life of pleasure; the first active and social, the second contemplative and solitary, that only "adopt as their scheme of presentation the ideal day" (85). Unlike Tillyard, Woodhouse observes an obvious difference in structure between the poems and the prolusion: whereas the former are clearly progressive in design, the **First Prolusion** remains "perfectly static." Woodhouse instead suggests that the impulse to write **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** came to Milton in a more natural manner. Having had the idea of writing a pair of poems "on rival conceptions of a life of pleasure," the thought must have arisen in using the ideal day as a possible pattern or framework for the poems. Milton then, and only then, remembered the **First Prolusion**, finding a number of valuable suggestions in imagery. The practice of "dipping" into past works (in this case **Prolusion 1**) in order to infuse new life into a work was not, according to Woodhouse, anything unusual or particularly new for Milton. Earlier examples where this practice had been carried off with great effect is the inspiration of the Music of the Spheres in the **Second Prolusion**, later recalled by Milton when writing the **Nativity Ode**. In fact Woodhouse finds evidence not only between **L'Allegro** and **Prolusion 1**, but also between **L'Allegro** and the

Carmina Elegiaca, itself based on an early prolusion which had been rejected.[13]

ii. The Gathering Storm - The Criticism of the 1950's

The following decade saw an abundance of criticism responding to Tillyard's claims that Milton's Companion Poems evolved from his **First Prolusion.** Most critics aimed at dispelling such a view. J.B. Leishman is the first during this time to enter the debate and to reject Tillyard's position.[14] Leishman, like Woodhouse before him, does not deny that the poems and **Prolusion 1** have points in common, but he is convinced these are weaker and more circumstantial than Tillyard would have us believe. Their relationship, in other words, is not so intimate, and he provides the reader with an alternative answer to the dilemma. Leishman is convinced Milton's poems can be fully appreciated only when considered in relation to Seventeenth-century poetry. He suggests that Milton is an artist conscious of current trends and styles and able to amalgamate them masterfully into his own works, producing creations that would nonetheless bear a stamp of high originality. Leishman thinks that John Fletcher and William Shakespeare represent two of the most important authors from whom Milton borrowed in writing **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso.**

Leishman finds the link between Milton's poems and Fletcher's song of the Passionate Man in **Nice Valour** simply too strong to be overlooked. He adds that though both play and song were not published until 1647, the song had been popular for many years and appeared in several manuscript collections from about 1620 onwards. Leishman thinks it is possible that someone may have shown Milton such a manuscript and (as he colloquially puts it), "have started (Milton) off." Such an hypothesis Leishman contends has sufficient merit recommending it: (1) it is simple; (2) it conflicts with no existing facts; (3) it involves no new interpretation of Milton's poems; and (4) no one can prove that it is untrue. The words to Fletcher's song open thus:

Hence, all you vaine Delights,
As short as are the nights,
    Wherein you spend your folly.
Ther's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see 't,
    But onely Melancholy,
    O sweetest Melancholy.[15]

Leishman says that while Milton's Companion Pieces are admittedly more important than Fletcher's work, he thinks them a part of the same tradition or fashion - that of seriousness, while at the same time maintaining a light-hearted poetical debate.

In his paper, Leishman also examines at some length Shakespeare's influence upon Milton's own verse, including the Companion Poems wherein such influence is keenly displayed. That Shakespeare's genius touched countless writers is a point not to be disputed and none perhaps drank more deeply from this cup than Milton as a recent biographer has justly pointed out.[16] Among the many parallels existing between these poems presently under discussion and Shakespeare, Leishman directs us to the following: where in **L'Allegro** (22) we read of the "fresh-blown Roses wash't in dew," Leishman believes Milton to have had the following words by Petruchio very much in mind:

> Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear
> As morning roses newly washed with dew.[17]
> (**Taming of the Shrew**; II, i, 172-73).

And the "dappled dawn" of line 44 in **L'Allegro** has as its analogue:

> and look, the gentle day, ...
> Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.
> (**Much Ado About Nothing**; V, iii, 25, 27).

In **Il Penseroso**, one of the poem's most memorable images,

> Far from all resort of mirth,
> Save the Cricket on the hearth (81 - 82)

is coupled by Leishman to the unforgettable scene in **Macbeth**:

> "I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?"
> "I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry."
> (**Macbeth**: II, ii, 15, 16)

Like so many of his contemporaries, Leishman adds that Milton not only displays an open debt to Shakespeare for imagery of external nature but also to his use of fairy lore. In **L'Allegro** Milton's use of the Faery Mab and Robin Goodfellow demonstrates, in Leishman's words, "the poetic possibilities of popular superstition," which Shakespeare had previously used to such great effect in **A Midsummer Night's Dream**.

Leishman, not surprisingly, dismisses Tillyard's notion that Milton's Companion Pieces are chiefly concerned with praising day and night. Much like Woodhouse before him, Leishman admits that day and night figure in the poems' scheme but are used only as a frame upon which Milton can build. Although day heavily dominates the activities of l'allegro and night those of il penseroso, their various pleasures clearly overlap, as Leishman is eager to point out. According to Leishman, then, "If...there is a contrast between the two poems, it is not that between day and night, and if there is a debate, it is not on the respective merits of day and night" (59). He sees the poems as Milton's attempt to present two distinct approaches to life, one of Mirth, the other Melancholy, despite Dr. Johnson's complaint that "the two characters (of the poems) were not kept sufficiently apart."[18]

Following Leishman's lucid and detailed argument on Tillyard's thesis, F.R. Leavis's criticism of Tillyard appears unusual to say the least. It is plain to the reader that Leavis's attack on Tillyard seems to concern itself more with personalities than it does with reviewing a scholarly work.[19] However, he does put aside his obvious dislike for Tillyard long enough to comment briefly on that which he finds most objectionable in Tillyard's affirmations. The first of these is the opening of **L'Allegro**, considered puzzling and even burlesque by Tillyard. Leavis thinks the remarks are unwarranted, saying essentially that Tillyard is fishing for criticism where there is really none to be found, and that he is the only critic to have thought of this passage in such an uncomplimentary way.

Leavis uses much the same method to counter Tillyard's major claim that seeks to connect the Companion Pieces to the **First Prolusion.** Again, Leavis is convinced that the idea is totally misguided and should not have been raised to begin with. As he remarks, "If there had been no such discovery of a 'solution' would there have been any problem to solve?" (35). What remains of Leavis's attack is more likely suited for a discussion on critical theory and thus of little help to expand our appreciation of the relationship between Milton's poems and his Prolusion. It is also evident from what Leavis says that he is outraged at Tillyard's scholarly method which he claims reduces Milton's stature as the great solitary genius of the age to a less then perfect artist in Tillyard's own mould.

The next important critic to offer comment on Tillyard's proposal is Edward LE Comte.[20] LE Comte's complaint is simple and direct - he believes Tillyard errs in thinking that just because various similarities may be found between the pair of lyrics and the **First Prolusion**, it necessarily means the poems "grew out" of the Academic Exercise. LE Comte thinks Tillyard underestimates Milton's habit of borrowing from his own works, often spanning decades. In other words, if Tillyard wishes to use this kind of evidence in order to justify his argument, LE Comte is convinced precisely the same method can be used to prove the opposite, namely, that the common features found in the poems and the Prolusion are not only inconclusive but can also be misleading as well.

LE Comte argues that if we were to adopt Tillyard's reasoning, a better case could be made in placing **L'Allegro** and Il **Penseroso** in the Horton period instead of Cambridge, because of the striking resemblances to **Comus**. Among them:

Come, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastic toe, (**L'Allegro**, 33)
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,
In a light fantastic round. (**Comus**, 143)
And young and old come forth to play
On a Sunshine Holiday (**L'Allegro**, 97)
Back Shepherds, back, enough your play,
Till next Sun-shine holiday; (**Comus**, 958)
Married to immortal verse, (**L'Allegro**, 137)
Storied of old in high immortal verse (**Comus**, 516)
Moon...
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
(Il **Penseroso**, 67, 72)
Moon,...
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
(**Comus**, 331, 333)

The resemblances here, claims LE Comte, are irrefutable; not only are the diction and grammar the same, but there is also the same meter and rhyme. Analogies which, when studied closely, LE Comte feels are more revealing than the "elusive analogies" used by Tillyard to prove his own argument.

Tillyard also fails to strike a sympathetic note with D.C. Allen, whose discussion of the Companion Pieces challenges nearly all ideas put forward in **The Miltonic**

Setting. He finds that the **First Prolusion**, likely "contains the seeds of the poems" but refutes Tillyard's suggestion the poems are "metrical annexes to the prolusion."[21] Furthermore, Allen decries Tillyard's notion of a "social tone" in the poems, but rather insists they are serious lyrics which purport to show Milton's quest for creative solitude, particularly so with **Il Penseroso.** Allen allows for the possibility that Milton wrote **L'Allegro** during his last years at Cambridge, but he cannot believe the poem was intended to provide the men at Cambridge with amusement. He therefore rejects the opening of the two poems as burlesque, adding that while the poems' initial exhortations may be construed as bombastic, in his opinion, "they are no more bombastic than public prayer" (8).

While not discussing Tillyard's dating of the poems, Allen has much to say about the structure of the two lyrics. In brief, he regards the poems as moving upward or ascending in importance to Milton's purpose as an artist. And while he does not specifically ridicule Tillyard's position in seeing their structure based "on the contrasted eulogy of day and night," Allen's own position is nonetheless an obvious repudiation of Tillyard's. For Allen, **Il Penseroso** clearly represents the intellectual and spiritual apotheosis begun in **L'Allegro.** For him, the second of the Companion Poems, "is the poem of a poet who has found his way" (11). The penseroso's objective is to strive ever forward to some day reach the pinnacle of what Allen calls "poetic gratification":

Till old experience do attain

To something like Prophetic strain. (173-4).

For this reason, Allen considers the tower as the crucial symbol of **Il Penseroso**. For while the edifice certainly embodies a sense of solitariness and loneliness in itself, it chiefly represents the ultimate goal for the aspiring poet.

iii. Tillyard in the 1960's

Among the critics so far mentioned, none has so fully endorsed the views of Tillyard than Marjorie Nicolson. Nicolson appears to have little difficulty in accepting Tillyard's main thesis in relating the Companion Poems directly back to the **First Prolusion**. Moreover, she finds the opening lines of **L'Allegro** to be burlesque, as claimed by Tillyard, thus opposing Allen and Leavis. Indeed, it is precisely these lines which had so disturbed some critics that Nicolson seems to find "most interesting" of all points suggested by Tillyard.[22]

Another interesting remark which Nicolson makes regarding Milton's Companion Pieces is that they were written during a time which also witnessed a growing interest in companion pictures. The subjects were in most cases related to one another (for instance, husband and wife, mother and daughter) who sat for their portraits in similar backgrounds to emphasize the "companion" motif. These portraits were, according to Nicolson, done in miniature as they would then be more easily carried when travelling.[23] Nicolson seems to suggest that perhaps Milton received some impetus from such visual art and possibly adopted their popular theme to create **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso.**

Another interesting comparison arises between William Parker's biography of Milton and his previous commentary. We may recall that in his early article Parker had completely accepted Tillyard's proposals. However, in his biography of Milton, published in 1968, Parker moves away significantly from his previous position. As with Allen, Parker concedes there might be possible similarities between **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** with **Prolusion 1**, but now dismisses outright any suggestion the poems "grew out" of Milton's academic exercises as Tillyard had declared.[24] Parker seems now to regard Tillyard's proposal an **idee fixe** and maintains that Milton could just as easily have used **Elegia Sexta** as the inspiration for the two poems. Parker claims that in his verse-letter to Charles Diodati, Milton may be seen also attempting to "portray poetically two different yet complimentary moods: the writer of light elegy, and the epic poet in preparation" (769). He also recognizes a "debate" carried on in **Elegia Sexta**, such as we find with the twin poems, reminiscent of the day-night **debat** that Tillyard championed. In a word, Parker is of the opinion that having written the **Elegia Sexta** in praise of both feasting and fasting, Milton need not have relied upon a particular piece of prose in order to write his companion poems. It is interesting also to note that although Parker can no longer abide by Tillyard's major premise, his mind is unchanged with respect to minor circumstances, related to Tillyard's main thesis. For example, Parker still believes the companion poems to have been aimed at a specific audience - his fellow students at Cambridge - and that the dating of the poems to be 1631 as Tillyard had claimed decades before.

iv. The Miltonic Setting at Present

As we have had occasion to observe, the 1950's was, without question, the decade which witnessed the full impact of criticism to Tillyard's thesis as outlined in **The Miltonic Setting.** However, by the beginning of the next decade, it was obvious that the issue sparked by Tillyard had all but ceased to engage Milton scholars any further. The pens of such noteworthy critics as Leavis, Le Comte, Tuve and Leishman, among others, were now silent, convinced perhaps that Tillyard's argument had been sufficiently discredited. Marjorie Nicolson is certainly among the last to respond to Tillyard's argument to any noticeable degree. William R. Parker's commentary during this period is, more interesting than Nicolson's fine-tuning of Tillyard's thesis for two reasons. First, having once been content with Tillyard's claims, he returns to it now, a full three decades later, to renounce Tillyard's evidence. Second, Parker's new critique of **The Miltonic Setting** may be understood as marking the death knell of further scholarship in the matter.

But if the decade of the 1960's saw a marked decline of interest in Tillyard's proposal found in **The Miltonic Setting**, criticism on the subject in the past twenty years has all but disappeared. In the rare instances where his name is any longer associated with the Companion Pieces, it is done so merely as a passing reference. No one has attempted to revive a debate which had in the past attracted the attention of some of the most respected Milton critics. For instance, an essay by Gary Stringer dealing with Milton's twin lyrics mentions Tillyard only as an example of "one of the standard critical approaches to the poems."[25] Most recently, Tillyard's once-famous argument appears briefly in an essay by Stella P. Revard who, like Stringer before, bids the reader to consider Tillyard's views of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** only as one in a number of possible ways in which the poems may be approached.[26]

Beyond Revard, one would search in vain to find any trace of the great debate initiated by Tillyard. Critics may have decided, at least for the time being, that the subject has been exhausted and can therefore see little benefit in pursuing the question further. The more fascinating matter which remains, however is to examine how successful the critics have been in silencing Tillyard's argument, and to see whether there is any room left for some new discoveries.

Notes

[1] Sara R. Watson has tried to connect **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** with the tradition of the shepherd's ideal day in "Milton's Ideal Day: Its Development as a Pastoral Theme." **PMLA** 57 (1942): 404-420; Maren-Sofie Rostvig, **The Happy Man** - 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Oslo: University of Oslo, 1962) 100-107 has examined links between the poems and the classical philosophic tradition of the **beatus ille**, or happy man; A.S.P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush **A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972) 227-231 suggest that the Companion Pieces are related to the Renaissance encomia; and more recently, Stella P. Revard "**L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**: Classical Tradition and Renaissance Mythography" **PMLA** 101 (1986): 338 - 350; has argued persuasively for the poems' connection with the classical ode or hymn.

[2] Tillyard appears to be the first important Milton scholar to have taken this position in **The English Association**, pamphlet No. 82, July 1932; and later to become the first chapter of his study, **The Miltonic Setting: Past and Present** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938) 1 - 28.

[3] The precise dates of each individual **Prolusion** still remain a subject for debate amongst critics. They were written over a five year period with the first appearing in early 1627 and the **Seventh Prolusion** in about April, 1632.

[4] All selections from Milton's **Prolusions** come from the Phyllis B. Tillyard translations, ed. Don M. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University press, 1953) henceforth referred to as **Works**.

[5] All poetry of Milton quoted is derived from Merritt Y. Hughes, **Complete Poems and Major Prose** (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

[6] Tillyard here admits that his argument is strengthened only if it is indeed l'allegro who comes to the window. The debate over the identity of line 45 remains very much unsettled. There are two main schools of thought: those who like Tillyard, believe it is in fact l'allegro, and those on the other side who think a lark is the correct answer. For a detailed account of this ongoing **debat** see Woodhouse and Bush; pp. 281-84.

[7] For more on the nature of the exercises required of students during Milton's days at Cambridge, see Notes and Prefaces to the **Prolusions** by Kathryn A. McEwen in **Works**; and J. Max Patrick, foreward, **The Prose of John Milton** (New York: University of London Press, 1968) 1 - 13.

[8] Kathryn McEwen thought of Milton's "attempts at humor" as "downright vulgar," and regretted their appearance altogether (**Works**, 265).

[9] W.R. Parker, "The Chronology of Milton's Early Poems," **Review of English Studies**, 43 (1935): 277-283.

[10] W.R. Parker, rev. of **The Miltonic Setting, Past &**

Present, by E.M.W. Tillyard, **Modern Language Notes** March 1940: 215-16.

[11] A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development, **University of Toronto Quarterly**, 13 (1943-44): 66-101.

[12] The lines are from **Ad Patrem**.

[13] For texts linking the **Carmina Elegiaca** with the earlier rejected prolusion see Vol. 1. 326-7 and Vol. 12. 288-91; in **The Works of John Milton**; Columbia University Press, 1931 and 1936 respectively. Woodhouse believes the passage from **Prolusion 1** used by Tillyard to demonstrate its affinities with L'Allegro's (**Miltonic Setting**; p. 12) **roses** and **dew** in line 22 is essentially wrong as they are connected with the marigold rather than the violet; and the dew connotes "weeping" instead of freshness or fertility. In the **Carmina Elegiaca**, however, Woodhouse sees a more obvious relationship to exist between it and **L'Allegro**. In the said Elegiaca we find:

> Iam rosa fragrantes spirat siluestris odores
>   Iam redolent violae luxuriatque seges
> Ecce novo campos zephyritis gramine vestit
>   Fertilis, et vitreo rore madescit humus
> Now the wild rose breathes fragrant odors, now
> violets smell sweet, and the corn rejoices.
> Behold, the fertile zephyr-born [goddess]
> clothes the fields with new grass, and the
> ground grows wet with sparkling dew.

Here claims Woodhouse are "the ideas and images - **roses, violets, dew** as the proper symbols of **freshness** and **fertility**, and **Zephyr as parent of a daughter** (apparently Milton's invention, as Hughes remarks) - which are adapted and recombined in the parentage of Mirth":

> **Zephyr** with **Aurora** playing, ...
> There on Beds of Violets blue,
> And fresh-blown Roses washt in dew,
> Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,
> (19 - 23)

[14] J.B. Leishman, "**L'Allegro** and Il **Penseroso** in Their Relation to Seventeenth-century poetry" **Essays and Studies**, 4 (1951): 1-36. rpt. in **Modern Judgment**, ed. Alan Rudrum, (Bristol: Macmillan, 1968) pp. 58-93.

[15] Quoted in Leishman, p. 60.

[16] A.N. Wilson, **The Life of John Milton** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 33-35 leaves little doubt as to the influence of Shakespeare on Milton, and in so doing is among the latest in a long list of critics.

[17] Quotations from Shakespeare are taken from **The Complete Pelican Shakespeare**, ed. Alfred Harbage, (New York: Viking, 1977).

[18] This is only part of Dr. Johnson's celebrated quotation from **Lives of the Poets.** Of the Companion Pieces he writes:

> Through these two poems the images are properly selected and nicely distinguished, but the colors of the diction seem not sufficiently

> discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of the imagination.

Samuel Johnson, **The Selected Writings of Samuel Johnson**, ed. Katharine Rogers, (New York: New American Library, 1981) 354.

[19] F.R. Leavis, **The Common Pursuit** (1952; London: Chatto & Windus, 1965) 33 - 36.

[20] Edward S. LE Comte, **Yet Once More: Verbal and Psychological Pattern in Milton**, (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953) 58-81.

[21] D.C. Allen, **The Harmonious Vision** (1954; Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1970) 3-23.

[22] Marjorie H. Nicolson, **John Milton: A Reader's Guide to his Poetry** (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1963) 51-52.

[23] For more on the development of miniature portraiture in the Elizabethan period, see H.W. Jackson's **History of Art** (New Haven: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977) 474-76.

[24] William R. Parker, **Milton: A Biography**, Vol. 2 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968) 770.

[25] Gary Stringer, "The Unity of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," **TSLL** 12 (1970): 221-9.

[26] Stella P. Revard, "**L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**: Classical Tradition and Renaissance Mythography," **PMLA** 101 (1986): 338-50.

II. Some Difficulties Resolved or Clarified

In the preface to **The Miltonic Setting**, Tillyard states that the primary concern of his study of Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** was to destroy once and for all time, their mythical connection with Horton (viii). As we have had some opportunity to observe, he was quite successful in achieving his aim, as the new date of 1631 seems to have been almost universally accepted, thus placing the poems in question to Milton's Cambridge days.[1] Unfortunately Tillyard's assertion that the subject of the Companion Pieces was that of Day and Night and that they owed their existence to the **First Prolusion** failed to win over many critics. Nor has he convinced me, for rather than praising Day and Night, the poems in fact describe two distinct pleasures: that of Mirth (**L'Allegro**) and Melancholy (**Il Penseroso**). I also hope to prove why Tillyard's insistence that the opening of **L'Allegro** is bombastic or burlesque in tone is a badly conceived notion, and shall attempt to examine the twin lyrics as biographical documents as further evidence against Tillyard's argument.

Several important Milton commentators have, during the "first wave" of reaction to Tillyard, done irreparable damage to the statements in **The Miltonic Setting**, bonding **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** to **Prolusion 1**. A.S.P. Woodhouse, J.B. Leishman and Edward LE Comte have, I believe, greatly undermined Tillyard's thesis by pointing out the precariousness inherent in an argument that is made to rest entirely on some similarity in imagery which exists between the two works. All three critics are eager to admit that while certain similarities can be found between the poems and the prolusion, they have shown that borrowing from a source need not necessarily mean a work of art owes its very existence to it. Woodhouse clearly drove this point home in stating that when writing the Companion Pieces, Milton not only reached back to **Prolusion 1** for inspiration, but he drew equally on the earlier **Carmina Elegiaca** which had itself borrowed heavily from an obscure prolusion. As Woodhouse has shown, the imagery borrowed from the **Carmina Elegiaca** to be more consistent and faithful to the spirit expressed in the twin lyrics.

In **The Miltonic Setting** Tillyard failed to take into account, when considering the origins of Milton's Companion Poems, their debt to the contemporary poets of Milton's time. This oversight, neglecting to appreciate the **Zeitgeist** of Seventeenth-century England on someone like Milton, would, I suggest, make it nearly impossible for any critic to speak convincingly of Milton's art. Leishman reminds us of this deficiency in Tillyard, stressing the great importance such figures as Shakespeare, John Fletcher, and Robert Burton on Milton when he came to write **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso.**

Edward LE Comte's argument, in **Yet Once More**, asserts that the evidence in **The Miltonic Setting** was circumstantial and misleading.[2] LE Comte is successful in demonstrating that

Tillyard's method to prove his hypothesis is double-edged, one that is just as capable of being used to disprove his position. He reiterates what Woodhouse had said a few years before, namely, that in speaking of Milton's art, there is danger in making too hasty a judgment, thereby leaving oneself with an all-too-narrow or incomplete appreciation of a given work. LE Comte's argument, showing Tillyard's eagerness to arrive at any decision with regard to a complex **oeuvre** such as Milton's twin lyrics, is especially valuable since its chief aim is not to replace Tillyard's argument with his own but instead to warn future critics of such an approach. Of this he says:

> But the point is that neither argument deserves credence. Milton is perfectly capable of inserting, as far as blank verse permits, a bit of **L'Allegro** into **Paradise Lost:**
>
> fairy elves,
> Whose midnight revels, by a forest side
> Or fountain, some belated peasant sees.
> (I, 781)
>
> Actually, "Midnight shout and revelry" is from **Comus** (103), that part of **Comus** which is in the meter of **L'Allegro.** Everything is in flux, for we are reckoning with the conscious and the unconscious processes of creation, whose laws have yet to be found (61).

While we recognize that we have now begun to delve into an area that is beyond the ken of this discussion, LE Comte's point is well taken: he thinks that Tillyard overlooked the deep intricacies involved in the Companion Pieces and oversimplified the evidence.

ii.

Having to some extent, begun to uncover Tillyard's method of linking **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** to the **First Prolusion** to be "the specious thing it is,"[3] we come next to examine his proposal in **The Miltonic Setting** that "from first to last the poems are constructed on the contrasted eulogy of day and night" (21). The statement is, of course, derived from Tillyard's more general premise that the Companion Poems "grew out of" Milton's First Academic Exercise, which was a debate whether day or night was the more excellent. But here again, Tillyard, as Woodhouse quite rightly suggests, would seem to have "overplayed his hand," distorting the would-be subject of the two poems.[4]

Though not explicit in his book, Tillyard may well have derived his idea Milton's twin lyrics to be describing an ideal day - a day of twelve hours, from David Masson's **Life of Milton.**[5] However, a little over a year following Tillyard's controversial stand on the Companion Pieces, there appeared an essay by Donald C. Dorian that goes a long way to dispelling Tillyard's concept of the "ideal day." He argues most lucidly that while Milton has arranged the activities in a sequential occurrence of each particular day, he doubts his intent was to depict a particular or single day.[6] For instance, Dorian emphasizes that a number of words within the poems would themselves indicate their actions to be "habitual and general rather than occasional or particular" (176). Among these, the reader is asked to consider the following, first in **L'Allegro**: "oft" (ll. 53,125), "sometime" (l. 57), "sometimes" (l. 91), and "ever" (l. 135); and in **Il Penseroso**, "oft" (ll. 63,71,73, 121), "sometime" (l. 97), and "never" (l. 155). Moreover, Dorian is correct in assuming the workaday occupations of lines 63-68 in **L'Allegro** cannot refer to the "Sunshine Holiday" of line 98, thus strengthening his position against Tillyard's assertion that the twin lyrics depict an ideal day. Rosemond Tuve supports Dorian's findings who says of the same poem

> its images are not individualized. Milton does not describe a life, or a day, but through images causes us to recall, imagine, and savour the exact nature of joy when it is entirely free of that fetter, care, which ties down the joys we actually experience in an order of reality that does not present us with essences pure.[7]

In addition, Tuve thinks the whole question of the "ideal day" depends very much upon lines 117-34 of **L'Allegro**:

> Tow'red Cities please us then,
> And the busy hum of men,
> Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold,
> In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold,
> With store of Ladies, whose bright eyes
> Rain influence, and judge the prize
> Of Wit, or Arms, while both contend

To win her Grace, whom all commend.
There let **Hymen** oft appear
In Saffron robe, with Taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique Pageantry -
Such sights as youthful Poets dream
On Summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If **Jonson's** learned Sock be on,
Or sweetest **Shakespeare**, fancy's child,
Warble his native Wood-notes wild.

Does L'allegro actually go to the city in the evening to partake of the festivities at court? As Tuve rightly affirms, such pleasures not only take place in the city, "but culminate in the dubious appositive, '"Such sights as youthful Poets dream/On Summer eves by haunted stream."' Tuve may be forgiven for wondering "where are we? and whence, and when, does the music sound?" (24). The answers to such questions are in reality a little more comprehensive than someone like Tillyard would have us believe. It is quite puzzling how a scholar of Tillyard's caliber could have misread such passages in **L'Allegro** to fit the pattern of the ideal day. At least one critic was wise to the entrapment that had victimized Tillyard, saying that in fact he "should prefer to get L'Allegro to the city in person, and that I do it whenever I read the poem uncritically."[8] Finally, as Dorian adds, it is difficult to see how such events as described in the poems could possibly be crowded into any one twelve hour period as

Tillyard suggested, ideal or not (177). From this, I think one could conclude that such a serious misreading of the time sequence and its activities in the poems seriously undermines Tillyard's position. This is also the conclusion of George Geckle, who has gone a step further in wondering whether Tillyard's misreading of the time scheme does not completely negate his argument outright.[9]

iii.

In chapter one of the **Miltonic Setting**, Tillyard also discusses at length "the significant social tone" in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**. He does so with the aim of showing that Milton's Companion Pieces, like his **First Prolusion** (we could include the remaining six **Prolusions**) were composed with a university audience in mind. Having convinced himself that **Prolusion** 1 is bombast or burlesque, and that the twin lyrics are offshoots of the same academic exercise, Tillyard concluded the opening of **L'Allegro** at least was to be considered in the same way. This, we must admit, is a peculiar form of deductive reasoning; one which led Woodhouse, quite rightly, to accuse Tillyard of "confusing matter with method".[10]

While there may be some agreement that individual passages in the **First Prolusion** are bombastic or burlesque (this is particularly true of the two passages quoted in Chapter One of this study), the opening lines of **L'Allegro** should not, however, be considered in the same light, despite any superficial similarities with the prolusion. Even if we would, for argument's sake, agree with Tillyard that the **First Prolusion** is bombastic in tone, designed to produce just the right kind of effect upon his fellow students, the evidence that he uses to determine the first ten lines of **L'Allegro** in the same social tone is totally inconclusive. One could find some support for the first of Tillyard's theories by saying that such academic exercises in Milton's day were after all, as J. Max Patrick indicates, designed to give the student full opportunity of exhibiting his learning in the art of classical rhetoric from such master rhetoricians as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian.[11] As Patrick says, such exercises, for all their apparent buffoonery, were scholastic requirements towards the student's degree in Milton's day, and therefore warranted careful consideration. I agree with D.C. Allen, George W. Whiting and others who do not share Tillyard's view that opening of **L'Allegro** is bombastic or burlesque, meant to provide comic relief to his fellow students at Cambridge.[12] Whiting describes the opening ten lines of **L'Allegro** as "serious and...organically as much a part of the poem as the opening lines of **Il Penseroso**" (140). Tillyard's susceptibility in making too much of slight resemblances between the two works, calls into question his ability to compare the social tone of **Prolusion 1** and the opening of **L'Allegro**. F.R. Leavis might be right in accusing Tillyard of "original critical extravagance," finding material for argument where none in truth exists.[13]

However, concerning the issue of social tone supposedly found in **The Miltonic Setting**, Tillyard was successful in convincing nearly everyone that Milton's Companion Pieces were written in the summer of 1631, while still a student at Cambridge. The difficulty in this equation seems to be that if Milton did write **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** at this time, where was the audience that would have aided Milton in giving the poems their "social tone," during the long summer vacation? It is difficult to picture Milton walking in the countryside, absorbed with all its splendor, mentally composing **L'Allegro**, while pretending to be addressing his classmates, and assuming a deliberate bombastic tone for his poem. Either the poems were indeed written in the summer of 1631, in which case Tillyard's argument of "social tone" would need to be dismissed and with it their previously close identification with **Prolusion 1**, or in order to accept Tillyard's theory joining **L'Allegro** with the **First Prolusion**, we would need to search for a more suitable period (perhaps during the academic year) in which Milton wrote the twin lyrics. I am here not pleading for an alternative date for the Companion Pieces, but simply trying to emphasize the unlikelihood that Milton had an academic audience in mind when writing his poems. If we accept an obvious discrepancy here, we have further undermined the integrity of Tillyard's argument which seeks to connect **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** to the **First Prolusion.**

iv.

Having refuted Tillyard's evidence in that Milton's Companion Pieces "grew out" of the **First Prolusion**, it seems necessary at this point to say a few words about the poems' meaning. Though critics may not agree on every aspect of Milton's twin lyrics, they unanimously agree the two supreme concerns in the poems to be Mirth (**L'Allegro**) and Melancholy (**Il Penseroso**). Indeed, one of the more interesting topics arising from these poems has been, as Gary Stringer notes, to discover which of the two, Mirth or Melancholy, is preferred by Milton himself.[14] For example, some maintain that Milton favours the latter.[15] Eleanor Tate, on the other hand, thinks that Milton has no marked preference, in presenting two possible approaches towards life.[16] Yet Dorian, representative of other critics, sees the poems as "setting forth rival conceptions of a life of pleasure, the one active and social, the other contemplative and solitary".[17] While a good argument could be made on behalf of any of these positions, I believe they fail to explain the complexities contained in the poems.

In the first place, to favour Melancholy, as do Allen and Whiting, would be an oversimplification of the play between the two poems, so crucial to their success. If we accept the idea that Milton is depicting two uniform and dispassionate views, as Tuve and Gregory contend, we are left with a rather un-Miltonic viewpoint, because this position would then imply the poems might have been written without some pre-conceived purpose; and if anything certain can be said of Milton's poetry, it is that each work was written with some definite aim. A.S.P. Woodhouse's postulation, supported by Dorian, would seem to come closest to describing Milton's intent when writing the Companion Pieces. Woodhouse and Dorian consider these poems to be some of Milton's most revealing biographical works, showing his attempt to decide which direction his life and poetry was to take. It is a portrait of the artist as he had been previously (**L'Allegro**), and as he wanted to be in Il **Penseroso.** As A.N. Wilson observes:

> If we take the pleasures expounded as being ones which Milton felt keenly, we should judge that at the age of twenty-one he loved the summer landscape of the journey to Cambridge; he loved good food, the beauty of women; he loved reading, theatre-going and philosophical speculation;[18]

But a careful reading of the Companion Poems betrays a good deal of tension between the two diverse ways of life. True, Milton had enjoyed the diversions Wilson notes and in works as **Elegia Prima, A Vacation Exercise**, and **Song on a May Morning** there is little to suggest an interior spiritual struggle taking place within the young poet. Then came the ecstasy experienced in writing **The Nativity Ode** which represents, as Wilson remarks, the beginning of Milton's awakening in many respects (32-3). He felt then for the first time he could become God's high priest and sing his glory, and defy Renaissance protocol.[19] In the Companion Pieces, we find the same dichotomy of being coming to the foreground. Although **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** are equally Milton, or indeed, two sides of most individuals, Eleanor Tate is partly correct in suggesting that in the poems at least, Milton rejects the life of Mirth in **L'Allegro** for **Il Penseroso's** poetic milieu:

> In **L'Allegro** Milton's world seems close to a small-scale vision of the ideal, green comic world of **As You Like It**, for example. This he sets against other unreal dream worlds: the chivalric past, the classical world of myth, the fairy tale world of Queen Mab and the goblins, and finally Shakespeare's world of romantic comedy. [20]

However, as Tate does well to add, Milton's idealized world as portrayed in **L'Allegro**, like Shakespeare's romantic comedies, is a surface world only, that reminds readers of this fact. Tate is correct in suggesting that in lines 137-40 of **L'Allegro** Milton is strongly hinting that to become absorbed with such an illusion "is to become lost in a maze" (588). The poet seems to almost regret in having allowed himself to describe "Such Sights as youthful Poets dream/On Summer eves by haunted stream." (ll 129-30). As later with Keat's Hyperion, Milton's poet comes to reject such a world as he describes in **L'Allegro** for the "the world of pain and tragedy" of **Il Penseroso.**[21] Like Keats, Milton realizes this is not the way to untwist "all the chains that tie/The hidden soul of harmony" (**L'Allegro** ll. 143-44). Finally, Tate astutely records that the doubts Milton has raised in accepting the life of l'allegro lie in the **if** of the final distich of the poem:

> These delights, if thou canst give,
> Mirth with thee, I mean to live.

In other words, there is genuine fear on the part of the **L'Allegro** poet that the life of Mirth, while pleasing on the exterior, may not be conducive to the life of a truly great poet. Conversely, there is no such apprehension found in the closing lines of **Il Penseroso**, as the Melancholy man is completely at ease in the path he has marked out for himself. As E.R. Gregory succinctly put it: "Granting that the poems have much to do with Milton's thoughts on becoming a poet, we have good reason to insist on **L'Allegro** as embodying a balanced appraisal of the road he did not take."[22]

v.

If Milton rejects the life of l'allegro for that of il penseroso (at least in the poems), we must not assume, as some have done, that at the time of writing his Companion Pieces, Milton had found his way as a poet.[23] Rather, it seems clear from the evidence presented by a number of critics, that in the summer of 1631, Milton was uncertain about his future. This condition, as Gregory observes, is evident not only while Milton was at Cambridge, but persisted during his stay at Hammersmith (532). In some of Milton's works composed at Horton, Gregory believes he sees the poet still vacillating between the two antipodes which were in fact visible throughout much of his life; between "a sense of dedication, the desire to make the best of what he has; and a sense of unsureness as to exactly what his capability is" (532). This chasm which divided Milton, had been visible almost from the beginning and perhaps expressed most eloquently in Sonnets vii "How Soon Hath Time," and xix "When I Consider." The first of these written about a year after the Companion Poems, the second a full 21 years later.

The Nativity Ode had been a moment of divine illumination for Milton, as were **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, serving as signposts where his future as a poet lay. The twin poems however, did not provide Milton with any final resolution and after 1631 he was still writing and preparing himself for the momentous challenge to write the kind of epic poetry worthy to stand beside such masters as Homer, Virgil, and Dante. With respect to the parable of the talents told in Matthew, a parable, as Wilson reminds us, to have always been especially important to Milton,[24] ... he writes in his "Letter to a Friend:"

> ...it is more probable therfore that not the endlesse delight of speculation but this very consideration of that great commandment does not presse forward as soone as may be to undergoe but keeps off with a sacred reverence, & religious advisement how best to undergoe not taking thought of beeing late so it give advantage to be more fit, for those that were latest lost nothing when the maister of the vinyard came to give each one his hire.[25]

Or again we find Milton attempting to justify his dilatory activity to his friend and confidante Charles Diodati:

> You ask what I am thinking of? So may the good Deity help me, of immortality! And what am I doing? Growing my wings and meditating flight; but as yet our Pegasus raises himself on very tender

pinions. Let us be lowly wise![26]

From this sample of Milton's correspondence from Hammersmith, we may assume that while he remained confident in his future vocation as a great epic poet, he had still to go some way in realizing his goal. As John T. Shawcross points out, "We may look back and descry tendencies toward a poetic life, but these are irrelevant if Milton did not realize where Time was leading him."[27]

vi.

I believe it was D.H. Lawrence who said that criticism always reveals the critic. Applying this dictum to Tillyard's argument we may conclude that our evidence has gone a long way towards dismissing Tillyard's connection of Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** to his **First Prolusion**. But the question of how a respected scholar like Tillyard could have made these oversimplifications deserves some attention.

It is obvious from what Tillyard himself has to say on **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** that he was somehow not confident of the task he set for himself in discussing the twin lyrics. He had clearly not meditated long enough on the subject's many-sided complexities. Of this he says:

> I have, however, never been very happy in my mind about **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, I mean about where they come in Milton's poetic development. Nor indeed, for all their apparent simplicity, have I been able hitherto to guess what Milton was aiming at when he wrote them (7).

Tillyard seems to be frank rather than modest in making this confession. Nonetheless, shortly after admitting his doubts about writing on Milton's Companion Poems, he is confident enough to say that that in these poems "There is no thought that is not easily grasped at once. Apart from a couple of minor syntactical difficulties the language is extremely lucid" (9). It is a puzzling about-face, one that led Tate to declare aptly that "Tillyard seems to miss the subtle complexities present in the poems."[28]

In this chapter we have been mainly concerned with showing the circumstances that led Tillyard to misinterpret Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** by supposing them to have been mere appendixes to the **First Prolusion.** We shall turn from Tillyard's partial view of Milton's twin lyrics to an exploration of their true subjects which were Mirth and Melancholy.

Notes

[1] Aside from those critics cited in this study who have accepted 1631 as the date for L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, A.S.P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush list several others who have fallen into Tillyard's camp: **The Minor English Poems:** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972) Vol. 2 of **A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton**, 6 Vols. pp. 223-338.

[2] Edward S. LE Comte, **Yet Once More: Verbal and Psychological Pattern in Milton.** (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953) 60-62.

[3] Ibid., 60.

[4] A.S.P. Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development," **University of Toronto Quarterly** 13 (1943-4): 66-101.

[5] Masson's monumental biography was published between 1859 and 1880. Tillyard may have been influenced by the sentence: "Look on, thou glorious youth, at stars and trees, at the beauties of day and the beauties of night, at the changing aspects of the seasons, and at all that the seasons bring!" Quoted in **The Miltonic Setting**, p. 2. However Tillyard may disparage Masson's Victorian viewpoint,there is no doubt that his **Life** had a noticeable impact upon him.

[6] Donald C. Dorian, "The Question of Autobiographical Significance in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," **Modern Philology** 31 (1933 - 1934): 175-82.

[7] Rosemond Tuve, **Images and Themes in Five Poems by Milton** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957) 15-36.

[8] Wiliam P. Trent; quoted in Dorian's "The Question of Autobiographical Significance in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," pp. 176-77.

[9] George L. Geckle, "Miltonic Idealism: **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," **TSLL** 9 (1968): 455-473.

[10] Woodhouse, "Notes on Milton's Early Development." p. 85.

[11] J. Max Patrick, forward, **The Prose of John Milton.** (New York: New York University Press, 1968) 3 - 13.

[12] D.C. Allen, **The Harmonious Vision** (1954; Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1970) 8.

George W. Whiting, **Milton's Literary Milieu** (1939; New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1964) 140.

[13] F.R. Leavis, **The Common Pursuit** (1952; London: Chatto & Windus, 1965) 34.

[14] Gary Stringer, "The unity of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," **TSLL** 12 (1970): 221-29.

[15] D.C. Allen, Ibidem. Allen does not explicity admit to this but such a conclusion is at least implied in his belief that in the twin lyrics there is a progression in the lives of **L'Allegro** to that of **Il Penseroso**. George Whiting, Ibidem, thinks Milton was at bottom a melancholic.

[16] Eleanor Tate, "Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** - Balance, Progression or Dichotomy?" **Modern Language Notes** 76 (1961): 585-590. This view is also shared by E.R. Gregory,

"The Road Not Taken: Milton's Literary Career and **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," **Discourse** 12 (1969): 529-538.

[17] Dorian, Ibid., p. 177.

[18] A.N. Wilson, **The life of John MIlton.** (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983) 34.

[19] D.C. Allen writes in **The Harmonious Vision** (p. xi) that Milton rejected the Renaissance "illusion" in considering God a poet and the world his poem with the poet himself a god and his poetry "a new world of his making." Instead, Allen thinks Milton adopted the more ancient tradition of such figures as Hesiod and Homer in stating that "the poet is no god, for God himself, is, through his intermediaries, the source of all human song."

[20] Tate, Eleanor. "Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** - Balance, Progression, or Dichotomy?" p. 588.

[21] In **The Fall of Hyperion**, Keats writes:

"None can usurp this height,"...
"But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest."...
(11. 147-49)

In fact, the feeling that the truth and beauty of life could only be found in the more serious occupations was evident already in **Sleep and Beauty**, written in 1816, three years before **The Fall of Hyperion**:

And can I ever bid these joys farewell?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife

Of human hearts:

(122-25)

David Perkins, ed. **English Romantic Writers** (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967).

[22] E.R. Gregory, "The Road Not Taken: Milton's Literary Career and **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**." p. 532.

[23] J.B. Leishman. "**L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** in Their Relation to Seventeenth-century Poetry," **Modern Judgements**, ed. Alan Rudrum (Bristol: Macmillan, 1968) 58-93.

[24] Wilson, **The Life of John Milton**. p. 37.

[25] Frank Allen Patterson, gen. ed., **The Works of John Milton**, vol. 12 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936) 324.

[26] Ibid., p. 27.

[27] John T. Shawcross, "Milton's Decision to Become a Poet," **Modern Language Quarterly** 24 (1963): 21-30.

[28] Tate, "Milton's **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** - Balance, Progression, or Dichotomy" p. 585.

III. The Significance Of Melancholia In The Poems

When Milton came to write his twin lyrics - **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, he was in large measure responding to a debate which had been going on almost unremittingly since classical times: the effect upon individuals of the four known humors - Melancholia, Choler, Blood and Phlegm, which were thought to determine their temperament, and consequently their fate. The argument over the **humor melancholicus**, however, seemed destined for special treatment as disagreement over its malignant and benign properties were by Milton's day, successful in creating two distinct viewpoints on the subject. The sources responsible for this division were classical; more specifically, Greek in origin. The first of these was Galen, who, in his capacity as anatomist, physiologist and physician, came to regard melancholy as an ignominious and miserable condition of the mind. A second view, that attributed to Aristotle, saw the melancholic in totally different light; it claimed in essence that when black bile, the agent known to cause the unfortunate results that Galen reported, when maintaining a "mean temperature" in an individual, created an ideal state most efficacious to intellectual activity. Milton would seem to have been keenly interested in Aristotle's definition of **melancholia artificialis**, or artist's melancholy, as it provided him with the possible stimulus, if not the framework, to express his own theories of knowledge and the power of the intellect. Milton was also interested in defining the limits of the intellect, and how it could be used as a vehicle, as it were, to go beyond the terrestrial world, and become one with the world of spirit. He would be aided in his task by the labors of two figures that were to prove crucial in providing the conditions necessary to complete his grand scheme. The first of these two figures introduced Aristotle's theory of melancholy to the Renaissance, which soon came to rival Galen's conception of the humor that had dominated thinking for well over a millennium.

i. Marsilio Ficino and the Rebirth of Aristotle's Problemmata XXX, I.

By the end of classical antiquity, the theory of the four humors, understood as determining the temperament of all individuals had been well established. The theory was given added currency, as Erwin Panofsky explains, because their number was equated to the vital forces in nature which shaped everyday life: the four basic elements (earth, air, water and fire), the four seasons, the four parts of the day, and the four phases of life.[1] Moreover, it was believed that every person had, invariably, one humor which ruled over the remaining three, and it was with that particular humor that a given individual was usually identified. For example, one in whom blood was found to be the dominant humor was thought to be most fortunate, possessing a temperament which was likely to make him cheerful, generous, as well as demonstrating a certain disposition towards wine, good food and love - faults that were considered most easy to forgive. Obversely, the melancholic humor occupied the exact antipodal position to the humor of blood, and was thus regarded with the greatest contempt. In addition, it was also believed that when the melancholic humor exceeded its natural state, black gall was capable of causing that most feared of all diseases - insanity. Although this condition could, admittedly, befall anybody, most were convinced that the peculiar disposition of the melancholic made him most susceptible. Such melancholics were to become known as **pessime complexionati** (the most ill-mixtured) and their character disparaged mercilessly. Amongst his worst flaws, the melancholic was said to be malicious, faithless, irreverent, sad, lazy, choosing solitude rather than company, and known to have a natural aversion to the opposite sex. The only redemptive feature of the melancholic was a propensity for study, a feature which his detractors conveniently overlooked, as Panofsky does well to point out.[2]

The Middle Ages, with its own special characteristic in explaining every facet of life in theological terms, managed also to bring about a radical transformation concerning the four humors. Whereas in earlier times an individual may have merely been considered unfortunate, and at worst shunned for the malevolent traits associated with his particular humor, the Medieval Church began to equate such deficiencies in persons as just punishment, and proof of the debased spiritual condition of mankind. However, as the Dark Ages slowly receded and the first waves of humanism were being felt throughout Europe, the attitude towards the humors, especially melancholy, was revised. One need only recall some of the more prominent figures in Chaucer's **Canterbury Tales** to realize the hold of the Church already beginning to weaken.[3] Interestingly enough, the change in which man came to regard the humor was initiated by a self-confessed melancholic and a leader of the Florentine humanists, Marsilio Ficino. Considered to be one of the foremost scholars in Neo-Platonist thought in Italy, Ficino had also translated a number of works of Plato and Plotinus. Himself a "victim" of the melancholic humor, Ficino attempted to mitigate the "evil" effects originally ascribed to the humor by time-honored methods: exercise, diet, by keeping regular hours and with music. His studies of classical writers, however, eventually brought him greater consolation in a work whose authorship had been at times called into question, but had now been attributed to Aristotle - **Problemmata XXX, I.**[4]

> Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholics, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile? . . . Among the heroes many others evidently suffered in the same way, and among men of recent times, Empedocles, Plato, and Socrates, and numerous other well-known men and also most of the poets. For many such people have bodily diseases as the result of this kind of temperament; some of them have only a clear constitutional

> tendency towards such afflictions, but to put it briefly, all of them are, as has been said before, melancholics by constitution.[5]

Why should black bile produce such divergent effects upon temperament? Aristotle was convinced the humor had, **in potentia**, the ability to fluctuate in temperature - from extreme heat to extreme cold, producing within the two poles a wide range of personality types. Cold melancholy, in Aristotle's opinion, caused lethargy, and feelings of dejection in individuals, while hot melancholy caused madness. But when black bile was understood to have a "mean temperature," it created a condition most suited to intellectual activity. Such individuals, adds Aristotle, are singled out by destiny and are superior to the rest of society in the fields of art, science, and public service. Along with other Renaissance thinkers, Ficino believed to have discovered, in Aristotle, the scientific basis of Plato's theory of "divine frenzy," thus **furor melancholicus** became synonymous with **furor divinus**.[6]

The contribution of Ficino in providing melancholy with a more than respectable alternative meaning to that proposed in the second century by Galen should not be underestimated. For while the subject of melancholy had been, as Klibansky, Saxl and Panofsky note, only "hinted at and still concealed behind symbols," they consider Ficino to be the first noteworthy scholar of the Early Renaissance to bring together Aristotle's interpretation of melancholy with Plato's theory of divine frenzy.[7] As well, they argue it was Ficino who first brought such revelations to the rest of Europe - especially to England and her great scholars and artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - "in the magic chiaroscuro of Christian Neo-Platonic Mysticism."[8]

ii. The Elizabethan Malady

The Aristotelian concept of melancholy, revived by the Florentine humanists of the late 15th century led by Marsilio Ficino, had succeeded in attracting increasing attention in Italy, particularly among scholars, artists and the aristocracy. Raphael too was said to be "malinconico come tutti gli huomini di questa eccelenza."[9] To be melancholic thus became regarded as a great distinction: "malencolia significa ingegno" (melancholy signifies genius). Predictably, it was not long before Aristotle's observation made in **Problemmata XXX,** I that many great men had been melancholic became twisted and understood to mean all melancholics were, ergo, great men. It was inconceivable then, that a subject attracting such influential members of society could have been contained within the boundaries of Italy, and by 1580, it is believed, Ficino's discovery of Aristotle's interpretation of melancholy had been noticeably felt in Elizabethan England.[10] This had come about to a large extent in much the same way as nearly all cultural or intellectual exchanges between countries - by travellers, in this case those travellers returning to England from the continent.

In his essay "Jaques and the Malcontent Traveller," Zera

S. Fink has shown that initial response of Elizabethan society towards such travellers was on the whole quite hostile.[11] Fink adds that travellers returning to England displaying melancholic traits had become so numerous as to constitute a social type, augmented by those Englishmen eager to acquire such affectations though themselves had never been abroad. Such individuals came to be considered a bane to public welfare, leading one contemporary observer to such depths of frustration as to invoke the Devil's help in order to be rid of the scourge: "Take some order, that the streets be not pestered with them so as they are."[12] These "malcontents," as they came to be known, were thought to have returned from their travels in Italy so corrupted by vice that they appeared to have lost all affection for their own native land, the Protestant religion and even lacked any faith in life as well.[13] Seemingly refined by his travels and experience, the malcontent developed a better or higher opinion of himself than the rest of society had of him. This situation in turn served only to isolate him still further and increase the suspicion of the populace towards him. He was labelled malicious and a threat to the general safety; seditious, a kind of Machiavellian antagonist to both the state and its religion. Sometimes his railing against the world turned inwards, then he shunned the company of others, choosing instead to find an isolated spot where he could rail at himself for his wretched condition. His dress, usually black, together with a sullen demeanor, easily singled him out as possessing all the unfortunate symptoms of all melancholics outlined by Galen's hypothesis. However, not everyone was prepared to condemn such individuals based entirely on appearances. There were those who attempted to see beyond society's prejudice against the malcontent and, instead, began to focus on Aristotle's concept of melancholy and try to discover what possibilities this alternative definition could have for their own work. In the poetry of the leading literary figures of the day - Shakespeare, Jonson and Donne, we find the interpretation of the melancholic humor splendidly detailed, including the ground-work later utilized by Milton to complete his own design for **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso.**

In several plays, Shakespeare demonstrates his full understanding of the many-sided features of the most famous of all humors, ranging from the most elementary approach of Galen to the most sophisticated Aristotelian version, culminating in what is perhaps its greatest artistic representation, Hamlet. In Shakespeare's earlier works we find the negative reaction of Elizabethan society brilliantly encapsulated. In **Titus Andronicus** for example, we have the anti-malcontent sentiment evident in the character of Aaron. As he is plotting iniquities, he speaks of Saturn as the source of his very desires:

> What signifies my deadly-standing eye,
> My silence, and my cloudy melancholy, . . . ?
> Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,
> Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.
> (II, iii, 32 - 39).[14]

In **King John**, the King hesitates whilst giving instructions to Hubert in murdering the young Arthur. He would prefer to speak more plainly only

> if that surly spirit, melancholy
> Had baked thy blood and made it heavy, thick, ...
> (III, iii, 42 -3).

In the following act, through a comment of Arthur's, we learn of the melancholic's propensity to strike a wistful, pathetic pose in society :

> Yet I remember, when I was in France,
> Young gentlemen would be as sad as night,
> Only for wantonness, (IV, i, 14 - 16).

Having determined to kill Duncan, Lady Macbeth invokes the help of the supernatural powers to "Make thick my blood" (I, v, 41), for thick blood meant melancholic blood. But it is not until Jaques in **As You Like It** that we find the first bona-fide melancholic character in Shakespeare. In this play we have first the malcontent type reviled by English society, as well as the melancholic capable in delivering some of the most unforgettable lines in all of literature. To begin with, it is made quite clear to us that Jaques has travelled and that he has been to Italy (IV, i, 30 - 34). Also, he is referred to in the play as "the melancholic Jaques" (II, i, 26, 41). He is depicted as sad, cynical, and rude and speaks of hating "th' infected world" (II, vii, 60). True to his type, Jaques prefers solitude to company, for at the close of the play chooses to lead a lonely contemplative life while others return to the Ducal court.

However, in **As You Like It**, Shakespeare also displays a keen understanding of the Aristotelian concept of Melancholy, as Jaques is also presented as a kind of a sage. He utters one of the most memorable passages in all of Shakespeare - that of "the Seven Ages of Man" (II, vii, 139 - 66). Furthermore, as Lawrence Babb suggests, Jaques also appears to us quite humane as evidenced by his repenting over the death of the deer which reduces him to tears.[15] But Shakespeare again confounds our sympathies towards Jaques during his conversation with Duke Senior, and the former's railing "against our mistress the world and all our misery" (III, ii, 265 - 66), is forced by the Duke to realize that the source of his misfortunes might just be himself and not the world:

> **Jaques** . . . I will through and through
> Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world,
> If they will patiently receive my medicine.
> **Duke.**
> Fie on thee! I can tell what thou wouldst do.
> **Jaques.**
> What, for a counter, would I do but good?
> **Duke.**
> Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin.
> For thou thyself hast been a libertine,
> As sensual as the brutish sting itself;
> And all th' embossed sores and headed evils
> That thou with license of free foot hast caught,
> Would thou disgorge into the general world.
> (II, vii, 59 - 69).

In **As You Like It**, Shakespeare is brilliant not only in representing the two opposing views of melancholy in the character of Jaques, but also in creating a sustained tension within the reader, challenging him to harmonize such opposing viewpoints.

There was yet another aspect of melancholy incorporated in one of Shakespeare's greatest plays, **Hamlet**, which evoked the most sensational response from most Elizabethans - religious melancholy. It was believed melancholics were more liable to succumb to delusion and mental aberrations, which in turn left them vulnerable to assaults upon the true faith by the powers of darkness. During such a time of weakness, it was thought the Devil's job in luring such poor misguided souls from the path of righteousness was greatly facilitated. In his essay "Hamlet, Melancholy, and the Devil," Babb believes this tradition to have been very much on Shakespeare's mind when writing his play.[16] He thinks Hamlet's distrust of the ghost might be caused by his weakened condition:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be a devil, and the devil hath power
> T' assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me, (II, ii, 584 - 89).

Thus melancholy became deprecated still further, and more seriously, on religious grounds. It was regarded as the **Balneum Diaboli**, the Devil's Bath. The work of the Devil it was thought, was made easier by the deranged condition of the imagination. once "moved to phantasy by the mediation of the humors," any individual would be easily lured and placed well on the road to damnation. Another feature of religious melancholy, as Babb explains, was the method employed by the devil to entice his melancholic victims with "the impious illusion that he is a prophet of God" (121). Such melancholics would speak of being "inspired" of the Holy Ghost. Even old women were supposedly encouraged by Satan to renounce God in exchange for supernatural powers which their diseased conditions allowed them to believe they actually possessed. It was thought that this was how witches eventually came into existence.

Perhaps due to the Renaissance belief that melancholic piety was "simply the vagary of a diseased and debased mind," writers such as Jonson were eager to show that their form of pious contrition had nothing at all to do with melancholy:

> Good, and great God, can I not thinke of thee,
> But it must, straight, my melancholy bee?
> Is it interpreted in me disease,
> That, laden with my sinnes, I seeke for ease?[17]

Not all, though, shared Jonson's view that true and genuine piety could not dwell in the melancholic's mind and heart. The most obvious example of this is found in Donne's dedication of his **Corona** of sonnets to the Deity:

> **Deigne at my hands this crown of prayer and praise,**
> Weav'd in my low devout melancholie.[18]

It was left to Milton in **L'Allegro** and **Penseroso** to reconcile the dualism inherent in the term **melancholy** as it was understood in the Carolinian period.

iii. Melancholia and the Companion Pieces

In her study of Milton's poetry, Marjorie Nicolson makes the interesting remark that as "Architectonic as Milton assuredly was, he was nonetheless always working from a blueprint."[19] The statement could be construed as admitting the obvious, for it may be argued that all poets incorporate in their own work much that has already been said, whether this is done consciously or unconsciously. Nonetheless, Nicolson's comment is very **apropos** with respect to Milton, for not only may he be considered among the most architectonic of poets, but we also find this claim to be clearly realized in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso.** This claim is all the more astonishing in that, within the scant 328 lines comprising the two poems, we find Milton's chief preoccupation as poet, scholar and seer wonderfully explicated.

We can with some confidence imagine the "blueprint" taking shape in Milton's mind after having become familiar with the many-sided argument concerning the four humors. It seems probable that when contemplating the theories of the humors, the question of man's imperfection must have followed almost naturally. This imperfection had been caused by man's expulsion from Eden. The Fall, as A.N. Wilson has pointed out, had for Milton been of singular importance, and he was many years later to use it with such great effect in **Paradise Lost.**[20] Milton had always felt the loss of paradise most keenly. Had sin never entered the world with the disobedience of Adam and Eve, there never would have existed the imbalance of humors subsequently existing in all individuals. Or as Erwin Panofsky explains most succinctly:

> In an ideal or absolutely healthy human being these four humors would be perfectly balanced so that none would predominate over the others. But such a human being would be immortal and free from sin, and we know that both these advantages were irretrievably forfeited by the Fall of Man. In practice, therefore, one of the four humors prevails over the others in every individual, and this determines his or her entire personality.[21]

Ironically, in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, Milton uses one of the four humors, that of melancholy, itself a symbol of man's fallen condition, to breathe, as it were, new intellectual and spiritual integrity into him. Using the definition of melancholy advanced by Aristotle and Ficino, Milton would prove in poetic terms what he argued in the **Seventh Prolusion**: that a life of learning was more desirable than one of ignorance. But he would go further. In part borrowing from Robert Burton's **Anatomy of Melancholy**, Milton would demonstrate how the intellect itself is to be used as a springboard to reach heaven's very door, disentangled from any earthly restraint. Like Ezekiel with his chariot, Milton would use the intellect to leave this pendant world and reach the very place where the creatures of heaven reside.

Recognizing the subjects of the Companion Pieces to be those of "Mirth" and "Melancholy" respectively, critics had then to determine the fashion in which Milton uses the terms.

On the major premise, that the Melancholy which is rejected in **L'Allegro** is different from the Melancholy described in **Il Penseroso**, there was total unanimity; with the same being true in the case of Mirth.[22] However, the views of two commentators would seem to have done the most to enhance our appreciation of the two lyrics presently under discussion.

The first of these critics, George Geckle, describes the poems not so much as opposites but rather as works which are played against one another to find out what is most congenial in both. In his words, "Milton's technique in both **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** is to define the ideal ('encomium') of each poem by establishing the exact opposite ('vituperation') of that ideal."[23] While the opening ten lines of **L'Allegro** describe the worst kind of melancholy, they are necessary, argues Geckle, in forming the "vituperation;" but its purpose is not immediately evident until we come to the "encomium" in **L'Allegro** and the invocation to Mirth, or Euphrosyne:

> But come thou Goddess fair and free,
> In Heav'n yclep'd **Euphrosyne**,
> And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
> Whom lovely **Venus** at a birth
> With two sister Graces more
> To Ivy-crowned **Bacchus** bore . . .
> (11 - 16)

The same method, claims Geckle, is used in **Il Penseroso**; only there it is the "vain-deluding joys (to be differentiated from l'allegro's Mirth) which is being admonished and ridiculed in favor of "divinest Melancholy" (466).

The second viewpoint, that advanced by William J. Grace, is in many ways similar to the sentiment expressed by Geckle. Grace argues that the method used in the poems presents the reader not merely with a contrast between their two moods (mirth and melancholy), but a quadruple distinction between two kinds of mirth and two kinds of melancholy: one kind healthful and good, the other dangerous and evil.[24] Grace contends that where in **L'Allegro** Milton speaks of the replacement of melancholy by heart-easing Mirth, he is recalling the Galenic definition of melancholy with its malignant properties. Following the vituperation, the poem goes on to suggest ways such an unfortunate condition can best be remedied. It would appear Milton found some help on ways to ameliorate the ill effects of this kind of melancholy in Burton's **Anatomy.** At one point in Burton's impressive study, he states that one way to cure this evil type of melancholy is by **catharsis**, "to drive out one passion with another, or by some contrary passion."[25] This may best be effected by undertaking a **deambulatio per amoena loca** - to make a pleasant journey in the nearby countryside:

> To walk amongst Orchards, Gardens, Bowers, Mounts, and Arbours, artificial wilderness, green thickets, Arches, Groves . . . to see some Pageant or Sight go by, as at Coronations, Weddings, and such like Solemnities, to see an Embassador or a Prince met, received, entertained, with Masks, Shews, Fire-works, &c .... Dancing, Singing, Masking, Mumming, Stage-plays...[26]

In the first of the companion poems, we find that many of the devices used by l'allegro to dispel the effects of the unfortunate type of melancholy are remarkably similar. Indeed, Milton appears also not to have forgotten Burton's dictum that mirth and merry company "may not be separated from Musick" (II, 137). Thus, in the poem we find l'allegro nearing the end of his ideal day caressed by

> soft Lydian Airs,
> Married to immortal verse,
> Such as the meeting soul may pierce
> In notes (136 - 39).

Translating these lines into a modern view, we could agree with David Miller, with respect to **L'Allegro**, that "The center of the poem is (among other things) a generalized case history of a black melancholiac undergoing Galenic therapy."[27]

In the opening lines of **Il Penseroso** we have (as the obvious opposite to **L'Allegro**) the banishment of mirth, now referred to as "vain deluding joys/The brood of folly without father bred." Where in **L'Allegro** Mirth could boast of a noble ancestry in Zephyr and Aurora, in **Il Penseroso**, "joys," as Geckle has keenly observed, "are given a more abnormal genealogy than even loathed melancholy."[28] Such joys now represent a lack of self-discipline or personal balance, and the words "without father bred," more than a hint of the illegitimacy of such wasteful pastimes. They are wasteful because however real such joys may appear, they have little to do with the idyllic world of the mirth presented in **L'Allegro**.

The encomium in **Il Penseroso** introduces us to another kind of melancholy which is more easily defined when considered in relation to "loathed Melancholy," "heart-easing Mirth," and vain deluding joys," to complete Grace's notion of the quadruple equation. We now find the earlier form of melancholy condemned in **L'Allegro** to be completely transformed, referred to now as a "Goddess, sage and holy" ...

> Whose Saintly visage is too bright
> To hit the Sense of human sight;
> And therefore to our weaker view,
> O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue . . .
> (13 - 16)

In **Il Penseroso** Milton is championing the melancholy of Aristotle and Ficino, which considered those "afflicted" of the malady to be counted among the most blessed on earth. Whereas in the first of the two lyrics the encomium expounded the special gifts of the sanguine humor, the second praises the unique achievements possible only to those individuals governed by the **humor melancholicus.** The melancholic temperament had long been associated with Saturn, "the ancient god of the earth," who "symbolized the 'Mind' of the world" standing for "profound contemplation as opposed to mere practical action."[29]

Rather than escaping the conditions which may accentuate the effects of melancholy as in **L'Allegro**, il penseroso in truth seeks to encourage them. Now the Goddess (Melancholy) is asked to bring with her "calm Peace and Quiet" (45), and under her guidance the gentle swain rejoices in solitary nocturnal walks

On the dry smooth-shaven Green,
To behold the wand'ring Moon (66 - 67).

He enjoys the intellectual advantage bestowed upon him by his **Melancholia Artificialis**. His life will, of course, be scholarly, and "walk the studious Cloister's pale" (156), and apply himself to the study of mystical and divine philosophy:

. . . let my Lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely Tow'r,
Where I may oft outwatch the **Bear**,
With thrice great **Hermes**, or unsphere
The spirit of **Plato** . . .(85 - 89)

His interest in the arts is, unlike l'allegro's, confined to tragedy and with those actions which promote reflection: the song of the nightingale, or the solemn sound of "the pealing Organ" and "the full voic'd Choir" (161 - 62). Thus employed, the Goddess will, in time, allow il penseroso the privilege of sharing the supreme gift known only to those individuals of the Golden Age; through Spare Fast, companion of Melancholy who

oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about **Jove's** Altar sing.[30]

The Music of the Spheres, having for aeons remained inaudible to mankind, is heard once again, but only to those like il penseroso who have received the help of the Goddess Melancholy.

This "Artist's Melancholy" of Aristotle's, while no doubt exercising an important influence in the intellectual background of **Il Penseroso**, nonetheless acts as servant to the religious element which undoubtedly lies at the heart of the poem. Indeed, from the very beginning of the encomium, the language acquires a more vernacular hue as Melancholy's lineage would attest. Geckle points out that as was the case with "loathed Melancholy, the key to Milton's attitude towards 'divinest Melancholy' resides in her ancestry."[31] In **Il Penseroso**, Melancholy is placed, through such language as "sage and holy," divinest and of "Saintly visage " plainly in a religious or sacred milieu. Where the external beauties of Mirth were emphasized in **L'Allegro, Il Penseroso** on the other hand focuses on the internal attributes of Melancholy, as well as her great power. In fact the Goddess's power is so great that she is compelled to appear to mortals in black as she is "too bright/To hit the Sense of human sight;" (13 - 14), reminding us of the God of **Paradise Lost** whose radiance is made bearable to humans only after it is filtered through a cloud. She is, moreover, referred to as "pensive Nun, devout and pure" (31), due to the fact of having obtained her purity from Vesta, a virgin daughter of the god Saturn. She is pensive, again because of her ancestral links with Saturn, who was regarded as the "Mind" of the world. This would tend to confirm Geckle's view that the world of Melancholy, as expressed in Il **Penseroso**, is "presented as a grave and serious being. We are in a world as ideal as that of Mirth, a golden age in which Saturn reigns, but one in which the poetic speaker is devoted to higher things; it is a happiness that will ultimately lead to, or, as Ficino puts it, one in which the mind 'is able to rest only in the infinite.'"[32] This point has also been emphasized by some critics using the Orphic myth as an example. In **L'Allegro**, Orpheus is the poet-musician who occupies an important role, particularly at the end of the poem. In **Il Penseroso**, Orpheus is elevated to the role of priest-prophet and not allowed to interfere in the poems' progression.[33] But what is the final step that will allow the gentle swain to establish communion with the infinite?

Grace is, I think, correct to suggest that here, too, Milton probably found inspiration in the **Anatomy** of Burton. Grace cites one section in particular which he feels would have had great appeal for Milton. The title(s) of this section is: "Religious Melancholy. Its object God; what his beauty is; how it allureth. The parts and parties affected" (III, iv, pp. 358). For Burton, the leap which will carry mortals beyond this limited sphere to the realm of the holy is contemplation, or meditation:

> It is the eye of contemplation, by which we must behold it, the wing of meditation which lifts us up and rears our souls with the motion of our hearts, and sweetness of contemplation:... He that loves God will soar aloft and take him wings; and leaving the earth fly up to Heaven, wander with Sun and Moon, Stars, and that heavenly troop, God himself being his guide. If we desire to see him, we must lay aside all vain objects, which detain us and dazzle our eyes, and as Ficinus adviseth us, get us

> solar eyes, spectacles as they that look on the Sun: to see this divine beauty, lay aside all material objects, all sense, and then thou shalt see him as he is.[34]

In Il Penseroso, Milton asks the Goddess "first, and chiefest," to bring with her

> Him that yon soars on golden wing,
> Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
> The Cherub Contemplation (52 - 54).

It is by contemplating the One or the Good, to use Plotinus's expression, that will ultimately lead il penseroso to join himself with the one Reality or Truth. Paradoxically, the fruits of intellect, which have taken il penseroso to the threshold of enlightenment, must perforce be discarded at that very spot. For what lies beyond cannot be grasped by intellect but exists beyond its ken. In the opinion of Plotinus:

> ....the perception of the highest God is not effected by science, nor by intelligence, like other intelligibles, but by the presence of him, which is a mode of knowledge superior to that of science. But the soul suffers an apostasy from the one, and is not entirely one when it receives scientific knowledge. For science is reason, and reason is multitudinous. The soul, therefore, in this case, deviates from the one, and falls into number and multitude. Hence it is necessary to run above science, and in no respect to depart from a subsistence which is profoundly one; but it is

> requisite to abandon science, the objects of science, every other thing, and every beautiful spectacle.[35]

Knowledge, as expressed in **Il Penseroso**, is used as the all-important tool with which to understand and marvel at the miracle and beauty wrought by the hand of its Creator. By contemplating upon such perfection, one is eventually led to the Source and the only true Object of veneration. In the **Seventh Profusion** Milton writes that the more we are able to appreciate the beauty and splendor found in Nature, the closer we come to understanding God:

> Scrutinize the face of all the world ... The more deeply we search into its marvelous plan ... the more we honor its Creator with our admiration and follow him with our praise.[36]

The life of knowledge or intellect is in time superseded by a life of holiness:

> Dissolve me into ecstasies,
> And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes, (165 - 6).

This is the **ecstasis** or ecstasy, as Grace adds that was so popular with writers of the Seventeenth-century including Burton, who writes in his **Anatomy**: Ecstasis is a taste of future happiness, by which we are united unto God, a divine melancholy, a spiritual wing ... to lift us up to heaven (III,394). Moreover, Milton's choice of Contemplation as a cherub is, as Tillyard suggests, appropriate because the special faculty of cherubim is knowledge and contemplation of divine things.[37] As Grace summarizes, "the contemplation of beauty leads to the contemplation of God" (582). Nearly two centuries later, another poet, no doubt remembering his Milton, would insist that Truth and Beauty were of one and the same essence, indivisible.

Finally, aware of the suspicion Elizabethans held for those claiming to possess prophetic powers as inspired by Satan, Milton is skeptical about the efficacy of the melancholic's powers of prophecy. Nonetheless he is convinced that through "old experience," he will

> attain
> To something like Prophetic strain (173 - 74).

Notes

[1] Erwin Panofsky, **Albrecht Durer** 3rd ed., vol. 1 Princeton: (Princeton University Press, 1948) 157.

[2] Ibidem., p. 158.

[3] Ibidem., p. 159. by this I mean to say that though Chaucer is obviously aware that the faults of the characters in his tales might have religious implications, he is nonetheless moving away from Church dogma; choosing instead to see such deficiencies sympathetically, as necessary components of the human condition.

[4] Lawrence Babb thought there was still room to doubt the authenticity of **Problemmata XXX**, I, even though he quotes Cicero and Plutarch who were convinced it was in fact Aristotle's. "The Background of **Il Penseroso**," **Studies in Philology** 37 (1940): 257 - 273. More recently, Dr. Lotte Labowsky would seem to have satisfied most critics that the **Problemmata** was indeed written by Aristotle. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl. Preface. **Saturn and Melancholy** (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1964) vi.

[5] **Saturn and Melancholy** pp. 18 - 29.

[6] The reference is found in **Phaedrus**, 245 wherein Plato writes that the poet must be touched with madness. Quoted in Babb "The Background of **Il Penseroso**," p. 262.

[7] **Saturn and Melancholy** p. 259.

[8] Ibidem., p. 255. Ficino's discoveries were included in his **magnum opus**, **De Vita Triplici** which met with great success

in Germany as well as Italy (Klibansky, Saxl and Panofsky, p. 165); the first edition was published in 1482.

[9] Quoted in Erwin Panofsky's **Albrecht Durer**, p. 166 . Freely translated this would mean that he, Raphael, had also been a melancholic like all men possessing such excellence.

[10] Lawrence Babb, **The Elizabethan Malady** (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951) 73.
Babb does not wish to suggest the subject of melancholy had been totally absent in England till 1580, rather he argues that references to it became more frequent after the said date. In fact there are several instances in pre-Renaissance English Literature where melancholy makes a distinct appearance. Chaucer, for one, seems to have been well acquainted with the theories related to melancholy, as exemplified most clearly perhaps in Pertelote's discussion on dreams in the **Nun's Priest's Tale**, II, 4113 - 29; and in his description of Arcite's lovesickness in the **Knight's Tale**, II, 1361 - 79. - (The A.C. Cawley edition, 1958)

[11] Zera S. Fink, "Jaques and the Malcontent Traveller," **Philological Quarterly** 14 (1935): 237 - 252.

[12] Thomas Nashe, **Pierce Penniless**. Quoted by Babb in **The Elizabethan Malady**, p. 74.

[13] Zera S. Fink, "Jaques and the Malcontent Traveller," p. 244.

[14] Quotations of Shakespeare are taken from the **Complete Pelican Shakespeare**, general ed. Alfred Harbage.

[15] Babb, **Elizabethan Malady**, p. 93.

[16] Lawrence Babb, "Hamlet, Melancholy and the Devil," **Modern Language Notes** 59 (1944): 120 - 22.

[17] "To Heaven," from **The Forrest** quoted in Babb, **Elizabethan Malady**, p. 177.

[18] Ibidem., p. 177.

[19] Marjorie H. Nicolson, **John Milton: A Reader's Guide to his Poetry** (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1963) 54.

[20] A.N. Wilson, **The Life of John Milton**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 37. Wilson believes the Fall, together with the story of Samson, and the Parable of the Talents, to be the pivotal subjects which nurtured Milton's life work. Few, I think, would disagree with this claim.

[21] Erwin Panofsky, **Albrecht Durer**, p. 157.

[22] Among those that subscribe to this view: Lawrence Babb, "The Background of "**L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**,"" p. 270; George Geckle, "Miltonic Idealism: **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**" **Texas Studies in Literature and Language** 9 (1968): 455 - 473.

[23] George Geckle, "Miltonic Idealism: **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," p. 458.

[24] William J. Grace, "Notes on Robert Burton and John Milton," **Studies in Philology** 52 (1955): 578 - 583.

[25] A.R. Shilleto, ed., **The Anatomy of Melancholy**, by Robert Burton (London: George Bell and Sons, 1903) 131, vol. 2.

[26] Ibidem., pp. 86 - 97.

[27] David Miller, "From Illusion to Illumination: A Larger Structure for **L'Allegro and Il Penseroso**," **PMLA** 86 (1971): 32 - 39.

[28] George Geckle, "Miltonic Idealism: **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," p. 466.

[29] Erwin Panofsky, **Albrecht Durer**, pp. 166, 167.

[30] The idea of fasting is yet another interesting subject separating the Melancholy of **L'Allegro** and that of **Il Penseroso**. In the former, fasting is thought to exacerbate the imbalance of the humors and thus worsen the individual's condition. See: Babb "Background to Il Penseroso," p. 271n. and Burton's **Anatomy**, Vol. 1, pp. 263 - 64 and Vol. 3, pp. 393 - 96. But in **Il Penseroso** Milton is promoting the Melancholy of Aristotle and Ficino where fasting is seen as a prerequisite to enlightenment and a preparative to devotion as Burton suggests in Vol. 3, p. 393. It is also in the second of the twin lyrics that we witness the significance of fasting, later utilized as a major theme in **Paradise Regained**.

[31] Geckle, op. cit. p. 469.

[32] Ibidem., p. 470.

[33] A more detailed discussion is offered by Marilyn L. Williamson, "The Myth of Orpheus in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, **MLQ** 32 (1971): 377-386.

[34] Robert Burton, **Anatomy**, vol. 3, p. 364.

[35] Plotinus, **Select Works of Plotinus**, trans. Thomas Taylor, ed. G.R.S. Mead (London: G.Bell and Sons, 1912) 306.

[36] Merritt Y Hughes, **Complete Poems and Major Prose** (New York: Macmillan, 1957) 623.

[37] Quoted in Geckle, p. 470.

IV. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso and the Renaissance Milieu

i. The Structure of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso

One of the more striking features of Milton's Companion Pieces which imposes itself upon the reader (apart from the octosyllabic rhyme scheme) is the parallel structure that informs the two poems. Curiously enough, it has been only recently that critics have begun to pay special attention to the structure of the twin lyrics that a most interesting anomaly has been discovered. Gary Stringer has observed that although **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** complement each other structurally, there exists an appendum or epilogue in the second poem which has no equal in the first lyric.[1]

To facilitate our argument, and better understand the import of Stringer's findings, it would be helpful at this point to present his proposed outline for the twin lyrics:

"L'Allegro"	"Il Penseroso"
1. ll. 1-10: banishment of Melancholy (10 ll.)	1. ll. 1-10: banishment of "vain deluding Joyes" (10 ll.)
2. ll. 11-24: invitation to Mirth (14 ll.)	2. ll. 11-30: invitation to Melancholy (20 ll.)
3. ll. 25-56: catalogue of Mirth's companions (32 ll.)	3. ll. 31-64: catalogue of Melancholy's companions (34 ll.)
4. ll. 57-88: pastoral description of workaday world (32 ll.)	4. ll. 65-76: description of nocturnal stroll (12 ll.)
5. ll. 89-116: description of holiday in upland hamlet (28 ll.)	5. ll. 77-84: description of night-time retirement to a still, removed place (8 ll.)
6. ll. 117-130: visit to towered cities (14 ll.)	6. ll. 85-96: retirement to a lonely tower (12 ll.)
7. ll. 131-152: visit to theater; concluding distich (22 ll.)	7. ll. 97-120: vision of tragedy (24 ll.)
	8. ll. 121-154: solitary rural retreat
	9. ll. 155-176: seclusion in cloisture and hermit's cave; concluding distich

Following even a cursory examination, it is possible to notice that the ordering of episodes reveals **L'Allegro** lacking any counterpart to the last two sections (numbers eight and nine) contained in **Il Penseroso.** Stringer contends that the apparent disparity in lengths is a conscious, deliberate act of Milton, and is designed to invite the reader to a closer scrutiny of the two poems. After such scrutiny, one is able to conclude, as Stringer has done, that in comparison with **Il Penseroso, L'Allegro** "comes to a relatively abrupt and somewhat unsatisfying end" (225). The logical question which proceeds from this is to ask ourselves why this is the case.

Following l'allegro's attempt to dispel the harmful effects of melancholy, Stringer thinks the description tracing the happy man's life is left conspicuously unfulfilled. In his estimation, the ordinary life pattern which one usually expects, taken chronologically, from birth-to-death-pattern, is severely restricted and suddenly abandoned **in medias res.** Stringer believes Milton had little choice in the matter since l'allegro depicts the life of a happy man; he realizes that after all Mirth is not "a meet goddess" for the mature or pensive individual. In other words, the very nature of the subject of **L'Allegro** restricts the limits in which it may expand.

The opening lines in **Il Penseroso,** in Stringer's judgement, nicely accommodate the transition between the two stages of life: that of the happy and mature man, with the strong suggestion that il penseroso is "one who has already served his time with Mirth or, to put it more exactly, that he is l'allegro grown older" (226). To emphasize this point still further, the reader is asked to consider a couplet in **Il Penseroso** that could never appear in its companion piece:

> How little you bested,
>
> Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys; (3-4)

As it is not possible for l'allegro to ever experience the fruits of the **melancholia artificialis**, we should not be surprised to find such corresponding lines lacking in the first of the twin lyrics. Conversely, il penseroso can speak with authority on the negative features of the "vain deluding joys" because he has at the earlier stage of his life served Mirth. His words carry much more weight of the two, because only the pensive man is aware to what extent Mirth is unsuited for the mature or "fixed mind." And, as has been noted, "according to the old rule governing poetic disputations, ... 'he who has the last word wins'"[2]

While not expressly concerned with the structure of the Companion Pieces, George Geckle nonetheless makes a keen observation regarding the elongated "episodes" in **Il Penseroso.**[3] Geckle thinks that the lines prefiguring il penseroso's religious and mystical seclusion (the epilogue), in anticipation of his "weary age," the speaker "moves from a point of stasis to one of action" (473). Through a critical examination of his youthful idealism, Milton has, according to Geckle, analyzed with sharp precision the two modes of existence that lay open to him as poet and clearly chose the side of il penseroso. The final "movement" of the poem, philosophically speaking, is proof of the resolution inasmuch as the eschatological requirement in Christian terms is at hand. For il penseroso, paradoxically speaking, death means the natural conclusion of his earthly existence with the prospect of reaching his true home in heaven, and everlasting life.

ii. Nature, Man, and God

Milton's Companion Poems contain within them features that are somewhat less exoteric than their structure has proven to be. In the twin lyrics, Milton has incorporated at least two subjects which were of enormous importance to the people of the Renaissance: The relationship between Nature, Man, and God, and the concept of time. It is to these subjects that we now turn our attention, and try to assess their importance to the poems.

The English Renaissance, we are informed, is known to have held two opposing views regarding the position of man in nature. The Earlier Renaissance accorded man a very high place in the sublunary world, and potentially at least, identified him as just a little lower than the angels. In contrast, the Later Renaissance, the time in which Milton composed his Companion Poems, was on the whole rather more sceptical about man's privileged status in nature, choosing to believe he had more in common with the animal kingdom than the heavens.[4] It was a period, as Spencer adds, wherein the universal order prevalent throughout the earlier years of the Renaissance underwent a revaluation of values, and the order was gradually replaced by a sense of chaos and of irrevocable decay. In **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** Milton addresses the conflict head on and in doing so leaves little doubt to which side of the argument he supports.

It is a remarkable fact considering the great intellectual fervour of the Earlier Renaissance to find almost complete unanimity when considering the more important issues of the day. Whatever disagreement there existed concerning a given subject seems to have been restricted to details. As Spencer explains, disputes may have, for example, arisen on **how** Christ was made manifest through the eucharist, but there was never any doubt whether He did or not. Moreover, there was no doubt whatever of the importance reason played in the process of knowledge, but there was debate on **what** exactly the function of reason was. And though the spirit of the times laid great stress upon man's personal ambition and achievement, there also existed a universal law which clearly defined the parameters and true purpose of man's existence. This law, largely appropriated from the Middle Ages, decreed that man was created, first and foremost, to know and love God. Thomas Hooker captured this sentiment most precisely when he said that "The soul was made for an end, and good, and therefore for a better than itself, therefore for God, therefore to enjoy union with him."[5] The extent to which man could aspire to such a union was predicated on his ability to have knowledge of his God. This could in turn be accomplished by studying the two books God had so magnanimously given to man: The Bible, and the book "of the universal order of things or nature." As Spencer summarizes: "to know God one must know His works; by knowing His works one learns the nature of man, for whom those works were made; by learning the nature of man one learns the end for which man was made, which is the knowledge of God" (3). The role man played in nature's design was pivotal, as he was considered the **nexus et naturae vinculum** - the knot and chain of nature. In order to play his part perfectly, it followed that man first needed to have a proper understanding of himself and of his environment. Having achieved this, it would then be possible for him to lead the life that God had intended for him. He would then come to understand the rules of nature, "those rules of old discovered, not devis'd."

Aristotle's belief that "God and nature create nothing that is not its use,"[6] had been mused upon for centuries with special interest paid to man's uniqueness in the cosmos. But though man enjoyed a high position in nature, and was given to rule over all else, his was a most precarious position, since he was in effect **ni ange, ni bete**, and it lay within his power to decide to which of the two he would belong. This predicament was expressed most simply and directly by the Italian humanist G.B. Belli who was of the opinion that man was essentially made up of two natures, one corporeal and terrestrial, the other divine and celestial; resembling in the former the beasts, in the other of the "immaterial substances" that was directed to the heavens.[7] This concept may be grasped at a glance in the following illustration:

God - pure actuality
angels - pure intellect
man - reason

animals - sense
plants - growth
stones - being

It is reason's primary function, in psychological terms, to sift out or distinguish from the sense data that which belongs to the immaterial forms. These forms are then intuitively apprehended through understanding or intellect, an intellect not unlike the pure intellect of the angels.[8] The onus was placed on man to decide for himself which of the two levels he would belong - upwards to the angels, or down to the animal world of sense. So far as the Neo-Platonists were concerned, there was no question as to where man's real home was:

> This heavenly creature whom we call man, was compounded of soul and body, the which body, having to be the harbor of a most fair and immortal soul, was created ... most exquisite, with his eyes toward heaven, and was placed in the midst of the world to the end that as in an ample theater, he might behold and contemplate the works of the great God, and the Beauty of the whole world...[9]

But if it was agreed that what was most noble in man aspired upwards leaving the terrestrial world below, did this a fortiori mean that the body, or matter was to be regarded as an evil in itself?

There is sufficient evidence that Milton, for one, did not share in this opinion, but rather believed the body to be a perfect creation in itself. This is made quite clear in Raphael's speech to Adam quoted above:

> O **Adam**, one Almighty is, from whom

All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not deprav'd from good, created all
Such to perfection, one first matter all,
Indu'd with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and in things that live, of life...

As William G. Madsen points out, Milton could not consider matter as evil since it was created voluntarily by God, it would then follow that matter was good and necessary to His purpose.[10] I think Madsen is correct in adding that rather than seeing evil as existing in matter, Milton considered evil as spiritual in nature, caused by the sin of our first progenitors. The body, which acts as the cover for the soul, is not defiled, but should be praised for its beauty and magnificence for important reasons: man was in the first place created in the very likeness of God and the doctrine of the Incarnation, as Madsen argues, conferred a new kind of dignity to matter, and in particular the human body. Furthermore, the beauty of the soul is reflected in the beauty of the body. This belief was expressed by one John Davies of Hereford:

But outward beauty inward love procures, because
It argues th' inward beauty of the mind[11]

At the very least, the body was seen as the vessel sheltering the soul which could be raised to the celestial spheres through the faculties of reason and intellect.

In sharp contrast to the dignity the Earlier Renaissance gave to man, the Later Renaissance thought his position in nature had been exaggerated, if not completely falsified. The idea that man was the **nexus et naturae vinculum** was now seen by the Renaissance as foolish since man had betrayed God's trust and was in consequence made an outcast of nature, needing to struggle for his survival as did other creatures of the earth. This theological shift of viewpoint was to a large extent caused by the new learning, especially that of Copernicus, Galileo and Montaigne. The Copernican revolution removed man from the center of the universe, and placed him upon one of the many planets revolving around the sun. If such a fundamental change of perspective could be violated, what other truths could not be looked upon with suspicion? For his part Montaigne, in his **Essais**, argued that at bottom there was little to distinguish between man and animals, and any pretence to man possessing a superior intellect and thus able to search after true reality was, for him, absurd. There was an increasing sense that perhaps the universe had not been designed on any eternal order after all, that the cosmological equation may have been violated. This feeling is superbly encapsulated by one of the period's most percipient interpreters, Donne, in his **Anniversaries**:

> Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
> All just supply, and all relation.
> Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot,
> For every man alone thinks he hath got
> To be a phoenix, and that then can be
> None of that kind of which he is but he.[12]

In **L' Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, Milton speaks unequivocally of the tripartite relationship between man, nature, and God as being one which remained insoluble. He could never agree with Montaigne that man's intellectual capacity was on the same level as beasts but remained steadfast in his conviction that it was through knowledge or education that man's hope was to be found. The Companion Poems remain one of Milton's most lucid documents where he defends this conviction.

The idyllic world of l'allegro is, according to David Miller, a most desirable one, a world which Milton knew intimately.[13] As well, given the belief that the mystery of kenosis had provided man with new-found dignity, the life of l'allegro is not lacking in virtue. It may be seen as the most ideal way man could live, but also possessing one deficiency: a deficiency that was crucial for Milton. For him, any life which did not have as its goal the aspiration to know one's creator is to be regarded as incomplete. As perfect as l'allegro's life is presented to the reader, it remains incomplete as it lacks this spiritual feature. We would not be amiss to compare l'allegro to the worthiest pagans so much admired by Milton in **The Nativity Ode** but eventually dismissed in favour of the Christian experience in which man reaches his spiritual apotheosis. This opinion is repeated by Patrides who quotes a passage of St. Paul as evidence of this surmise(68). Even pagans, says St. Paul, cannot be wholly ignorant of the ways of God as "that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead"

(Rom. i, 19-20). L'allegro's incompleteness or deficiency is aptly described by Miller as "any state that is not useful as a movement toward God, any state that becomes an end in itself, is unsatisfactory" (37). Miller further believes that what is most noble and pure in **l'Allegro** is eventually fused into **Il Penseroso**, executed with skill and even playfulness that is a master stroke of genius. Thomas Greene agrees with Miller's observation, regarding the two poems as "artifacts of sublime playfulness."[14] Regarded in this light, Milton's statement in the **Christian Doctrine** that "in the regenerate, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is daily tending towards a renewal of its primitive brightness,"[15] is placed in proper context. In other words, tending once again to discover "that which was engraven on the heart of Adam," to quote Madsen once again.

While Milton agreed with Calvin that because of the fall "our reason is totally blind and stupid," [16] not able to reflect properly upon divine matters, he nonetheless felt man had been left with sufficient reason to reconstruct himself, as it were, and rise to the level originally ascribed to him by his Maker. Despite man's original transgression, God, Milton believed, had never completely abandoned him but yet adorned him with excellent talents. He was able to excel in the earthly pursuits of science, poetry, art, logic, mathematics, using this knowledge to find his proper place in nature and to rise up the "scale of nature" till he at last beheld the gates of heaven.[17] In **Of Education**, Milton outlines the aim or purpose of education:

> The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection.[18]

Echoes of this sentiment could be found as early as 1632 in his **Seventh Prolusion**:

> Yet without learning, the mind is quite sterile and unhappy, and amounts to nothing. For who can rightly observe and consider the ideas of things human and divine, about which he can know almost nothing, unless his spirit has been enriched and cultivated by learning and discipline? (Hughes, p.623).

It is through knowledge that man is able to most effectively realize his eternal part in nature. Through learning and discipline one learns virtue and the divine spark in himself placed there by our Creator. Miller in fact sees a direct link between education and the moral progress of the soul: "When Milton writes what we would now call psychotherapy he is also speaking of education; when he writes of education he also speaks of moral progress" (33). Miller also does well to add that learning is valued only as it is leads to virtue, while learning for its own sake is understood as greatly inferior to virtue: "Milton," says Miller, "designates learning and virtue as the proper goals for man, but if a choice must be made, he picks virtue" (36). This concept was to be explored later in **Paradise Regained** where it was no coincidence that the last of the temptations of Jesus was Greek learning and culture, the one Milton knew, as he speaks in **Lycidas** to be "That last infirmity of Noble mind."(71) It is also important for us to remember that while the Companion Pieces conclude in the vision of heaven, Milton's message of salvation through education is intended for the spiritual benefit of fallen man. It is the sinner on earth, not the saint in heaven, whom Milton has in mind.

iii. The Idea of Time in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso

In **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** Milton also confronts a subject which had profound influence upon Elizabethans: the preoccupation with time. For the people of the Renaissance, time, as Ricardo Quinones has shown, was a great discovery.[19] Never before in human history, had the affairs of men been regulated by timepieces which were being perfected during this period. As well, Elizabethans, as Quinones explains, were overcome by the increasing sense of the fleeting nature of their new discovery and consciously set out to challenge this formidable enemy. One method by which some individuals could obtain a modicum of revenge against their opponent was through fame - to leave some reminder by which future generations would be able to remember they had ever existed. Through poetry, for instance, an individual's name would live on indefinitely, even though his mortal remains might be decayed and returned to dust.

The spirit of such classical figures as Virgil, Homer, Ovid and Horace, so much a part of Renaissance learning, was proof of the power and glory possible to those fortunate enough to be blessed by the muse. To a large extent, Milton was himself not immune to this point of view as even his earliest Latin elegies will attest. In addition, I think Quinones is correct in his opinion that in his **Seventh Prolusion** and **Of Education**, Milton shows himself to be very much the product of his time in extolling the Renaissance value of letters, as well as his zeal in accomplishing great things in life so as to acquire glory and fame (446-47). Nowhere is this more apparent than in **Ad Patrem**, Milton's "poetic epistle," where he promises to take his place "in the company of learned men," and "sit with the ivy and laurel of a victor."

Quinones, however, is also correct it seems to me, in observing that alongside this secular desire for fame, there was in Milton a recognition of its limitations, that "the desire for fame had to undergo a harsh subordination to purely religious priorities before it could be restored to its former validity" (25). Saint Augustine, for example, had written how a life led solely in acquiring glory and fame separated man from his God. No doubt Milton also remembered the famous passage on fame's illusory power in book two of **The Consolation** of Boethius:

> A little fame lives on inscribed in stone,
> A line or two of empty reputation:
> We know their splendid names but not their selves.

> You, too, lie utterly unknown to men,
> And no renown can render you well-known:
> For if you think that fame can lengthen life
> By mortal famousness immortalized,
> The day will come that takes your fame as well,
> And there a second death for you awaits.[20]

There was in Milton, a religious sentiment evident even in his earliest works. In the sonnet, "How Soon Hath Time," for example, Milton defies the Renaissance convention to seize the day, refusing to place his trust in any ready response but placing it instead in the will of heaven. Though he feels outside appearances may belie his inner potential as poet, he will decline to impose himself at present and place his trust in God under whose guidance he will attain true greatness. This dichotomy between what we could describe as "outer illusion" and inner ripeness is in the poem **On Time** magnified to include the world itself where religious fulfilment and peace preside over all else:

> Attir'd with Stars, we shall for ever sit,
>   Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee
>   O time. (20-23).

Quinones sees in Milton's refusal of the Renaissance convention of **carpe diem** something of the heroic; to discard the temporal temptation to "be somebody at all cost," but rather with the "better fortitude" Milton, in Quinones' estimation, "moves forward with a sense of completeness and trust into the unresolved and the terrible" (27). Criticism has also revealed to what extent the Companion Poems describe the **sacra profanis** view of Milton's idea of time.

In **Voices of Melancholy**, Bridget Lyons shows that what separates the existence of l'allegro from that of il penseroso is the latter's heightened awareness of time.[21] Through syntax and imagery Lyons sets out to prove her thesis that of the twin lyrics, only the pensive man "has an imagination of himself as existing in time" (152). She notes that the world of l'allegro, lived within the span of an ideal day, shows his experiences to be unrelated and disjointed. This point is made more clear to us by the language Milton uses to connect successive scenes, which seem quite abrupt: "Then to the Spicy Nut-brown Ale," (100); Tow'red Cities please us then," (117); "Then to the well-trod stage anon," (131). Such descriptions in the action suggests to Lyons a strong sense of disunity and lack of continuity. As well, the conspicuous absence of any first person singular pronoun in **L'Allegro** robs its speaker of "a sense of consciousness," as for example line 117 cited above, as well as

> Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
> Whilst the Landscape round it measures, (69-70).
>
> Towers and Battlements it sees (77).

There is, as Lyons maintains, a visible incongruity between what l'allegro **sees** and his **description** of such scenes:

> There let **Hymen** oft appear (125),
>
> Then to the well-trod stage anon (131),

and,

Sometimes with secure delight
The upland Hamlets will invite, (91-92)

What we find in **L'Allegro**, claims Lyons, is a mind that "wills scenes into being and into assuming a kind of independent existence, filling the mind and leaving little space for the subjective" (153). Lyons thinks the absence of any first-person pronoun in **L'Allegro** is likely owing to the fact Milton used the device as a corrective to ward off the unpleasant effects of the worst kind of melancholy. Evidence of this may be found in at least two passages:

Then to come in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow
(45-46).

And ever against eating Cares,
Lap me in soft **Lydian** Airs
(135-36).

There is a strong sense of unfruitful stasis in the imagery which l'allegro attempts to describe. It is a kind of reducing of the self, or as Lyons more aptly describes it, a "wish for pleasurable self-annihilation" (153).

In contrast to **L'Allegro** lacking sense of time, Lyons, like D.C. Allen, sees a greater "fluidity" in **Il Penseroso.**[22] She considers the modulated transitions in the second of the twin lyrics as proof of the pensive man's awareness of time and this in turn provides the reader "the continuous rather than discrete nature of experience, filtered through a consciousness of which we therefore become aware" (154). This fact becomes evident early on in **Il Penseroso** with the use of the first-person pronoun:

> Thee Chantress oft the Woods among,
> I woo to hear thy Even-Song;
> And missing thee, I walk unseen,
> On the dry smooth-shaven Green,
> To behold the wand'ring Moon, (63-67).

The personality of the speaker, so resplendent in these lines, is also given a new dimension when we consider the kinds of transitional words used to connect the scenes in the poem. Words such as "oft" and "sometimes" give, as Lyons is correct in suggesting, a sense of habit or custom to the life of il penseroso. And while the most popular word in **L'Allegro** to indicate the passing of time is "then," the speaker of the second poem has at his command a repertoire of several, more complex terms: Words such as "when" (128,131), "as" (151), "while" (126,142), or "till" (122) show what Lyons calls "a three-dimensional view of time, or of events seen not merely in succession, but in a variety of temporal relationships to each other" (155).

Finally Lyons believes there is a relationship between the notion of time in the Companion Pieces and the world of literary genres, which each of the two speakers evoke in their respective poems. In the less time-conscious world of l'allegro, it consists of the romance, pastoral, comedy, masque and pageant. On the other hand il penseroso's sense of existing in time together with the feeling of duration it implies, allows for more sombreness, more suited to tragedy, which brings with it a sense of heroisim for one's choice and actions which are irreversible. For l'allegro, some references used to indicate time are the images of the milkmaid, mower, shepherd and ploughman which Allen has shown to be standard archetypal figures marking the seasons in individual calendars and book of hours (6). They appear more as distractions, rather than to indicate that natural time in the poem has any significant value or purpose. By contrast, il penseroso's time-consciousness enables him at the end to devote himself to higher things as the logical extension of life on earth, and in his desire to transcend time itself in his wish to leave this terrestrial world. And in the lines "And may at last my weary age/Find out the peaceful hermitage" (167-68) the logical conclusion to the passage of time that has been so effectively chartered in the poem.

Not only is the speaker in **Il Penseroso** conscious of existing in a world of time but this fact also produces in him an increased self-awareness. Klibansky, Saxl and Panofsky share Lyons' assessment of time in the second twin lyric and have perhaps taken the argument a step further.[23] They have shown that apart from the brooding meditation and prophetic ecstasy usually ascribed to **Il Penseroso**, the bitter-sweet sensation caused by soft notes, perfumes, dreams, landscapes effected by darkness, solitude, and even grief all work upon the speaker to create a concept of the self never before seen in literature:

> I hear the far-off **Curfew** sound,
> Over some wide-water'd shore,

Swinging slow with sullen roar;
Or if the Air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing Embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the Cricket on the hearth,
Or the Bellman's drowsy charm (74-83).

It is a contradictory feeling wherein the soul relishes, as it were, in its own loneliness and is by that very fact able to indulge in such solitude as "the joy in grief," or "the mournful joy." I think Klibansky, Saxl and Panofsky are correct in regarding this new development in il penseroso's melancholy as the beginning "'poetic' melancholy mood of the modern" (231), especially endearing to the Romantics. Moreover, this modern melancholy mood described in **Saturn and Melancholy** as "essentially an enhanced self-awareness, since the ego is the pivot round which the sphere of joy and grief revolves" (231), would confirm the opinion of Merritt Y. Hughes who sees in these poems evidence that Milton knew something of the psychology of his time (68). It is perhaps also worth noting that while music is used to allay the harmful effects of melancholy in **L'Allegro**, for il penseroso, it serves to soothe and indeed nourish the bitter-sweet mood, which is now, as Klibansky, Saxl and Panofsky indicate, made totally subservient to subjective emotions (231).

On the metaphysical plane, il penseroso's enhanced self-awareness brings him also face to face with the finite and the infinite. Here the pensive man shows himself to be richer than his counterpart, l'allegro, in being able to experience both the pleasure of such a contradiction as well as its sorrow (which is itself a kind of "joy in grief"). The speaker in **Il Penseroso** is able to gaze at the finite world of l'allegro with sympathy as such pleasures as he enjoys are, paradoxically, the very seed of his death. Perhaps this is what Dr. Johnson really had in mind when he said of Milton's companion pieces that, "No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth." By contrast, il penseroso, as Klibansky, Saxl and Panofsky conclude, is able in his self-sufficient sense of sorrow to give a positive value **sub specie aeternitatis** and to attach himself to it.

Notes

[1] Gary Stringer. "The Unity of **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," **TSLL**, 12 (1970): 221-229. Other critics before Stringer have remarked on the imbalance in the lenghth of the two poems: George Geckle, op. cit., p. 473; and Marjorie Nicolson, op. cit., 59. However, Stringer appears the first to have considered the subject important enough to have written exclusively on it.

[2] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl. Preface. **Saturn and Melancholy** (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1964) 229.

[3] George Geckle, "Miltonic Idealism: **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, **TSLL** 9 (1968): 455-473.

[4] Theodore Spencer, **Shakespeare and the Nature of Man** (New York: Macmillan, 1949) 1-50. As the title of the book suggests, the focus of its study deals almost entirely with Shakespeare. However, the first two chapters of the book offer an excellent introduction of the idea of nature in the Renaissance period. Another useful and succinct appraisal of the idea of Nature in the Renaissance is found in the third chapter of C.A. Patrides' **Milton and the Christian Tradition** (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966). Patrides seems to deviate very little from Spencer's views, and on one occasion, (76n) uses his book as a source. More recently, Jonathan Dollimore has examined man's relationship to Nature and God within the context of the "cultural materialism" school of thought: **Radical Tragedy** (Chicago and Brighton: U of Chicago

Press and the Harvester Press, 1984). Also, it would do well to remember as Spencer points out that the terms "Earlier" and "Later" Renaissance are used chiefly as points of reference and should not be understood as having nothing in common between them. For example, many in the Earlier Renaissance had been already contemplating the changes regarding man's previously exalted position, and some in the Later Renaissance, such as Milton, still maintained man's integrity despite the changed attitudes.

[5] Quoted in Spencer, p. 2.

[6] Ibidem, p.10.

[7] Ibidem, pp. 11-12.

[8] In **Paradise Lost**, Bk. V, 468 ff., Raphael explains to Adam the difference in perfection of intellect separating man from the angels:

> Discursive, or Intuitive; discourse
> Is oftest yours, the latter most is ours,
> Differing but in degree, of kind the same.

Also quoted in Spencer, p.12.

[9] Annibale Romei, **Courtier's Academy** 1546; translated into English 1598 quoted in Spencer, p.4.

[10] William G. Madsen, "The Idea of Nature in Milton's Poetry," in **Three Studies in the Renaissance** diss., New Haven, 1957 Yale University Press, 1958 183-283.

[11] Quoted in Spencer, p.14.

[12] Ibidem, p.31. In this passage, Donne is also

responding to the political upheavals in the world brought about by the writings of Machiavelli.

[13] David Miller. "From Illusion of Illumination: A Larger Structure for **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**," **PMLA**, 86 (1971): 32-39.

[14] Thomas M. Greene. "The Meeting Soul in Milton's Companion Poems," **ELR**, 14 (1984): 159-174.

[15] Quoted in Madsen, p. 278.

[16] Ibidem., p. 278

[17] The idea that man first needed to find his correct place in nature's hierarchy before aspiring to the spiritual plane is found in **Paradise Lost** BK. V, 507-512 where Adam acknowledges Raphael's instruction to the relationship between Man, Nature, and God:

> O favorable Spirit, propitious guest,
> Well hast thou taught the way that might direct
> Our knowledge, and the scale of Nature set
> From centre to circumference, whereon
> In contemplation of created things
> By steps we may ascend to God.

[18] John Milton, **Complete Poems and Major Prose**, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, 1st. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1957) 631.

[19] Ricardo J. Quinones, **The Renaissance Discovery of Time** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972) 3. A more general study of Milton's attitude towards time may be found in Chapter 1 in Edward Le Comte, **Milton's Unchanging Mind** (Port Washington, New York and London: Kennikat Press, 1973).

[20] Boethius, **The Consolation of Philosophy**, trans. V.E. Watts, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 75-76. Milton's attitude to fame is perhaps expressed best in **Lycidas**:

> **Fame** is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
> Nor in the glistering foil
> Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumor lies,
> But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
> And perfect witness of all-judging **Jove**;
> As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
> Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed
> (78-84).

[21] Bridget Lyons, **Voices of Melancholy** (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) 149-161.

[22] D.C. Allen, **The Harmonious Vision** (1954; Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1970) 10.

[23] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, **Saturn and Melancholy** (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1964) 228-240.

iv. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been essentially twofold: first, it sets out to disprove the argument of E.M.W. Tillyard outlined in the first chapter of **The Miltonic Setting** linking Milton's Companion Poems to his **First Prolusion.** It was concluded that Tillyard's error lay primarily in his oversimplifying the evidence he presented, in attempting to prove Milton's twin lyrics as extensions of **Prolusion 1**, composed several years earlier. Having failed in this endeavor, Tillyard nonetheless proved successful in establishing 1631 as the new date for Milton's twin lyrics, a suggestion which has withstood for six decades. With respect to Tillyard, we need also to point out that while his decision to prove **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** "grew out" of his First Academic Exercise met with ridicule, he has nevertheless performed a valuable service to Milton studies. Only a figure of Tillyard's standing (even Leavis referred to him as an authority) could have been able to elicit a response from so many distinguished scholars. By their reaction to Tillyard's proposals in **The Miltonic Setting**, our appreciation of Milton's famous lyrics has increased.

The second aim of this discussion, intimately connected to the first, was to explain at some lenghth what Milton's Companion Pieces "were really about." Melancholy had during the late Sixteenth and early Seventeenth-century, as Lawrence Babb shows in **The Elizabethan Malady**, been among the most important subjects occupying the attention of scholars and poets. As Babb and other critics such as C.A. Patrides and

Thomas Greene have pointed out, the literature on this most popular of the four humors was too amorphous in nature, making the task of finding sources for Milton's poems difficult at best. This thesis has advanced several suggestions thought to be more obvious than others although it would perhaps do well for us to remember the words of Marjorie Nicolson, that while Milton's great strength was his ability to synthesize vast and differing sorts of material, he was in her words, "always working from a blueprint." The Companion Poems serve as a great reminder to this claim. This feeling is shared by Lyons and Babb, the latter of whom claims that "the melancholy of the Aristotelian tradition was never more beautifully celebrated" (180).

One of the "happy accidents" of this study has also been to give **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso** a more deserving place with respect to Milton's canon. They have for too long been referred to in patronizing terms as "yielding quick dividends," " pretty," "or "charming." Dr. Johnson's remark that "they are two noble efforts of imagination" (134) is one of the highest compliments paid to the poems. In truth, the two lyrics, even more than **The Nativity Ode**, written two years earlier, are arguably the first works where we find Milton's chief concerns as poet splendidly revealed. His ideas regarding fame, for example, education, the concept of time waiting, man's place in nature and relationship to God - not totally developed in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, at the very least, exist in these poems in embryo. This is a [illegible] achievement when one considers their brevity relative to the acknowledged masterpieces of Milton's later period.

But the poems are important for another reason. It is by now a cliche to say that an artistic creation, in order to be significant must needs have something vital to impart to future generations beside their own. It may be a cliche to say so, but difficult to find many who would disagree. Milton's Companion Poems, I maintain, may be called immortal, in the sense they contain the very fibre of the time in which they were composed, their message speaks eloquently to us three centuries later. Indeed, Theodore Spencer believes that we of this century have much in common with the English Renaissance:

> there are periods in recorded human history when the essential problems that concern human nature come to the surface with more than usual urgency and are expressed with more than usual vigor. We are living in such a period ourselves; Shakespeare lived in another: the difference between them may perhaps be summed up by saying that Shakespeare's age was breaking into chaos, while our age is trying to turn chaos into order (ix).

Donne's epitaph for the society in which he lived could without difficulty be ours as well:

> Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
> All just supply, and all relation.
> Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot,
> For every man alone thinks he hath got
> To be a phoenix, and that then can be

None of that kind of which he is but he.

Time, it seems, has stood still; we have been separated from our forebears only in space, by the irrevocable spin of this planet around a bright star. Finally, and this is perhaps the most important message found in **L'Allegro** and **Il Penseroso**, that we as human beings, created in the very image of God, we alone determine what end we fashion for ourselves. We have the power to decide whether we shall be stewards of this world, treat it with respect and care for its well-being as instructed, or to be shamefully asleep at the return of our great task-Master.

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